

THE GLORY OF
HIS COUNTRY

By

FREDERICK LANDIS



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NEW YORK
Charles Scribner's Sons
1910

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Published February, 1910



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CHICAGO

THE GLORY OF HIS COUNTRY

CHAPTER I

HAPPYVILLE was the highest point in all the country round, and rivers formed a wish-bone at its base. The fathers had cut the garment of the place to fit the trees and left them—oaks, elms, walnuts, maples, sycamores—standing in the sidewalks—even in the streets, for these were wide beyond the dreams of traffic.

Time-stained columns before the court-house hushed protesting taxpayers with an awe of government and refreshed artistic spirits with a glimpse of Greece. All was life about this temple of justice; old men lounged upon its broad steps, tossing problems of state into Scorn's back yard; in the courtroom above, the lawyer placed a finger

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upon the hapless juror's knee and gave vent to tumult heard afar, while higher still, pigeons walked forever round and round the cornice.

As the city stranger paused before the venerable homes with wide porticoes, leaf and sunlight—playmates since creation—made golden pictures on lawns of plush; birds sang at their building; bees drank from roses; squirrels scampered off with the cares of earth—and the city turned to a pillar of salt.

The place wore many ribbons of distinction. There was a dentist who gave "laughing gas," a band with a slide trombone, and a reticent painter, who lived alone and claimed to be Charley Ross. The judge had gained "second sight," cast away his cane, and won a re-election after the bar had solemnly declared him feeble. The soldiers' monument had been unveiled by Gen-

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eral Grant on his return from around the world. The American House had a bridal chamber, the County Fair had never discounted a premium, the key to the jail was lost, and there was neither poor-house nor potter's field.

But rarest of all was a "Son of the Revolution"—one of the Republic's few! He had been a boy with Jackson at New Orleans, and later knew the great La Fayette. What a dear old spirit "Uncle Peter Whitcomb" was, counting his hundred years blandly as the moon counts lovers, when, with children round his knees, he put the winter night to rout with endless tale.

This mere speck upon the map had sent brave men out to battle-fields, and brilliant ones into life's affairs, and now it claimed two thousand sterling souls—such as are the "Old Guard" of governments everywhere.

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Among the creaking signs round the public square was one of rusty tin—"Daniel & Halfpap, Attorneys & Counsellors." In his thirteenth year Philip Daniel had resolved to become another Washington; it was the afternoon he had won the mule-race at the Fair. Later he served as printer's devil, brushed flies at the blacksmith shop, worked in harvest fields, taught school, bought an interest in a wandering circus, and one bright morning, before the judge with "second sight" could recover from astonishment, he had been admitted to the bar.

After this event, farmers were accustomed to see the pale, slender youth, hawk-featured, bare-headed, long of limb and raven locks, high of collar and ambition, his hands gesturing strangely, striding toward Signal Rock, a limestone obelisk five miles away. Then

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time cooled his zeal and reduced him to the ranks of the unaspiring.

Michael Halfpap had never been molested by heroic meditations. Philip's ancestors must have been wearing armor and soothing ladies in distress when Michael's were simply raising carrots for the barons. The latter's right eye was gray, the left one brown, and while the first caressed, the second defied. His nose was brief, and his face seemed to hurry from it. Fixed purpose was in the lips, deep lines at the sides indicating the same to be of mirthful nature; while freckles in the left cheek formed a "Job's coffin." The Happyville theosophist glanced at Mr. Halfpap but once, then consulted the orbit of Adam and declared Michael to be none less than grandfather himself!

This youthful partnership was more than shingle could imply, spanning the

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infinitude from possessions to desires, and every month the landlord entered, only to learn the folly of living for pelf alone. By keeping creditors distinct, one could remain to "receive" when the other stepped to the roof; the hall was long, and they knew the tradesman's tread as sailors sniff the gale afar, a mental strain which was lifted in summer by keeping the door at an angle which flashed into a mirror all who mounted the stairs.

Such was the "active practice" one spring afternoon when a siren whistle tumbled into confusion the cob-piped, story-telling lot in "Daniel & Half-pap's" office, causing Philip to rush to action in a red helmet, for he was "Corporal" of the volunteer fire department.

More commanders than men soon issued from the town hall with hose-

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cart, buckets, axes, and pikes, charging up the street, preceded by one William Stiff, a harmless worthy given to ringing a bell at the head of demonstrations. The flower of Happyville looked upon them and knew not fear—and Fate leaned over the edge of her strange star to let fall a rose—and a thorn.

In the “Red Front” book-store stood a Phenomenon with sailor hat, October hair, and such a face as nature sends in answer to the cynics. Her wide blue eyes were as gracious deeds; old sunsets lingered in her cheeks; she was honesty in bloom—one of Time’s elect who asked no bribe to be glad, wished naught that noonday cloud had not; sweetened insipid hours with gratitude for being, took ills as promises of better things, and smiled throughout the day in token of a kinship with all mornings from the first.

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A murmur rippled through the crowd; "Corporal Daniel" had dropped the hose-cart rope and, shoved aside by his hurrying fellows, stood in the street, transfixed. He rubbed his face, then, possessed by the pinkest of frenzies, plunged into the store, but the Phenomenon merely gazed upon the tugging line of firemen and then resumed a magazine. An object crossed the "Corporal's" vision; he would have brushed it aside by divine right had it not proved to be the proprietor.

"What will you have, Philip?"

The young man's eyes widened; "I—I want—I called to get 'Demosthenes's Oration.'"

The proprietor shook his head suspiciously; the "Corporal's" exit was noiseless; his mission had been grotesque—and he had deserted the public defence!

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He walked two blocks and returned to find the vision gone.

Then an epoch fell—the “Cannon Ball” whistled for a stop—the first time since Hiram Hatfield had had “floating kidney” and the great specialist came. A mighty hand hurled the red-helmeted youth down the street with lightning speed; the earth arose to strike his feet with rubber paddles; it was a horizontal fall.

A little later would have been fatal; the conductor was waving his hand; the rear door opened and upon the observation platform, buttoning a light traveling coat to her chin, stepped the Phenomenon!

With helmet high, he paid silent tribute, and she clasped the railing, bewildered.

The sailor was gone, and in its stead a cap—a checkered island, round which

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tossed surf of the hue of harvests, after dew and night have mellowed the pattern of the day.

The wheels turned faster; she leaned slightly forward; her head lifted; the lingering sunsets flushed into an after-glow; her eyes were filled with something like pebble shadows in a brook; the air rippled with gold; a breeze blew over the spicelands of Araby; she smiled and cried: "Good-by, Demosthenes!"

"Farewell, Incomparable One! Come back some time!"

The train curved out of sight with the world hitched to it.

"Going to the lawn fête to-night?" inquired Halfpap when Philip returned.

"I'm never going anywhere—I've been to war!"

Michael grew sympathetic. "I don't blame you—I saw her. Who is she?"

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Philip sank into his chair with a sigh. "Come nearer, my dear Halfpap—I'll whisper in confidence: she's the Angel Gabriel, in a better shape—God pity all whose resurrection day doesn't come till after death."

The partners were looking down the hall next morning when the postman appeared. "This one seems a little different," he observed, holding a square envelope to the light.

Philip knew it would break Michael's heart and longed to snatch it away. The latter's glance conveyed the clairvoyance of long intimacy, as he broke the seal and calmly read aloud:

"DEAR COMRADE:—Enclosed find dissolution of the celebrated firm of 'Daniel & Halfpap,' formed four years ago under a misimpression that life was a house-party.

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“I divorce you as Napoleon divorced Josephine, and by way of alimony, give you our cable address, ‘Wolf.’

“I keep the back room and give you the front—you to have access to the roof at all times.

“Aside from each other, there is no reason why we should not prosper.

“Devoted Halfpap, hail and farewell!

“PHILIP DANIEL.”

Michael bore himself like a Spartan, then turned, his pen rasping the silence like a file. After a few moments he requested a loan sufficient for postage and special delivery stamp.

They were discussing some issue vital to the race when a messenger delivered the following:

“DEAR PHILIP:—I knew it was a tragedy the first day, but we had that embossed stationery—and what is more inelegant than lines drawn through a letter-head!

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“Once I did resolve, but the recollection of your pulling me out of the mill-race started the old refrain and I decided to let things drift, hoping in the course of time we would be mobbed—a means of dissolution free from all embarrassment.

“I am glad no witnesses are essential to a legal division of chairs, and that it can be a quiet home affair.

“M. HALFPAP.”

Philip was lonely after this sensation of the legal world had been consummated by Michael's taking his departure. The door between them would always be open, yet life could not be the same.

The serious phase of radiant resolutions is a leaping into new liabilities, as if debts born of such transports paid golden dividends. Before dinner Philip reached out boldly. He acquired a janitor, persuaded that the time had

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come in his life when this important step should be taken; he also secured a safe, a great bargain—a year's time. It was an age, considering the size of the safe. Then suddenly fearing that some one might seek to dispossess him of the premises, he arranged for an endless lease. The establishment was most cheerful; it had been a photograph gallery, and a mountain scene, left by the artist in his haste, divided the room into parlors of jurisprudence, while the slanting glass roof was indescribable in a storm.

Halfpap's destiny was to unfold in the "developing room."

Strategically, Philip thought his office superb. He could see the farmers—the hope of the legal profession—as they entered the wagon-yard, while the view of the court-house was such that in future law-suits, the bai-

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liff could merely step to the balcony and call his name. This would be a great convenience for the bailiff. Then in moments of diversion—for he would be compelled to take them—he could slant a chair against the window and see the lawyers' team pitch horse-shoes against the doctors'.

If anything, the future was unfolding too swiftly. As a result of becoming effort, he had been invited to address the Old Settlers' Picnic, and now was busily writing some lines on "Our Upward Way." He would pause as from his pen fell some bit of imprisoned splendor.

Across the street, idlers now gathered round an organ-grinder who sang: "She died when I was at sea." Philip's vision grew indistinct. What if during the applause which was to greet that Old Settlers' speech, he should behold a

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glorious creature in travelling coat and sailor hat, clinging helplessly to the spell?

It did seem foolish, still when had the leaves ever whispered so?

Tapping with his cane, the blind singer passed a cup; Philip tossed his last coin from the window, then gazed far over the hills where a grove of dog-wood wrapped its snowy scarf round a country church-yard. Yes, it would be a great speech, and who could tell?—a young man's triumph on such an occasion once made him governor!

He surveyed frayed cuffs and wrote a line: "Let us beware of luxury; such was the curse of Rome!"

Philip turned suddenly as a guest pounded down the hall; it was Colonel Hardy, the town capitalist. When Philip had embarked in the circus business the Colonel was famous for helping

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young men, and meeting him on the bridge, the budding Barnum had simultaneously revealed his identity and a note for five hundred dollars; and using the applicant's back for a desk, Hardy had welcomed the hazard, saying: "Glad to meet you, Mr. Daniel; it's a fine business—good luck!"

Philip now arose to greet his friend, but the latter stood in ominous silence. He was over six feet and straight as a West Pointer should be at seventy. The bristly, white mustache, the smooth, tanned face, the alert step, the bold nose, jaw, and eyes suggested his *Alma Mater*. The Colonel's gaze grew more intense, then he placed before Philip a copy of the *Trumpet*, still fragrant of ink, and pointed to the comment:

"A certain young Happyvillite was missing at the fire in Humphrey's 'second-hand parlor.' He started, but

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Ha-ha! Success, Phil; the *Trumpet* tenders congratulations in advance."

Philip's face was swept with indignation, but it vanished before the Colonel's rising temper:

"Mr. Philip Daniel, that's full of dynamite!"

And as the young man marvelled, the old man walked away.

CHAPTER II

THE Old Settlers' Picnic was wonderful. All creation streamed in with the dawn, and dusty threads hung over the roads for miles. There were floats with girls in old fashions, cabins on wheels, horsemen in hunting-shirts, while the town was dressed till it looked like a woman.

Two flags, faded and torn, hung before the court-house. Both had been given to departing regiments on the spot, one waving all the way to Mexico, the other from Donelson to Atlanta. Soldiers hobbled around them, and a blind man, led by a child, went up to "feel the colors."

People just visited in the morning, old friends meeting for the first time in a

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year. It was not "conversation"; they meant it; it was "talk," honest as grass, fragrant as an "out-oven" of bread.

"Whur's the boy Zack took to raise—the one sent out from the East?"

"Oh, you mean Willie—the 'bound boy'; why, bless you—in Californie; got a wife and six children; sent his picture back last Christmas; roses in bloom—think of it!"

"Father" Post with transparent face, beaver hat, and old stock, called grandfathers "John" and "Samuel" as the day he baptized them. He is asked to settle a dispute—"The first white funeral—let me see—it was in '28—that cold New Year's before the spring the 'milk sick' was so terrible."

Four generations surround a woman with snowy hair, silk bonnet, and pale glory round her face; she declines one chair after another.

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“Oh, no, thanks; the idy—slip of a girl like me! Well, as I was a-sayin’—for the earache, you take a pipe, fill it with tobacco, an’ start it; lay a cloth over the bowl—just like this; put the stem in the child’s ear an’ blow the smoke in back’ard, then close the ear with cotton, an’ the smoke ’ll cure it without fail!”

Boots were “blackened” at home; white dresses had the rare scent of ironed cleanliness, and little boys and girls felt stiff, dressed up on a week-day!

Neatness is a kind biographer; it told how these had seen the whites of the eyes of pioneer life but feared nothing save debt; how they had never thrown a crust away nor turned a tramp from the door; how they had saved the last cartridge, and sat up with the sick; how they had made a

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nation with the sickle and the spinning-wheel—and never thought about it.

There were no beggars, drunkards, thieves, anarchists—none but folks who look like the flag.

Amos and William—lawyer and cartoonist—were home for the day—the farm feeds the city so its own sons may reap the city's rewards. And how these two were greeted; there is no knight-hood like the pride of old neighbors.

Candidates were shaking hands and laughing boisterously; bands tramped up and down, playing "Indian Ghost" and "Wake Up, Sandy"; toy balloons floated like bubbles over all; cane-racks, peanut-stands, taffy-hooks, ice-cream tents flourished. Under a canvas the youth and his "girl" had tin-types taken, and once when a child was lost, hundreds searched till, all smiles, it was restored.

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The meeting was called to order at eleven o'clock, and rocking-chairs presented to the oldest couple; then came sack and wheelbarrow races, and a fifty-yard dash for all over sixty-five, after which a greased pig cast the multitude into confusion till it was claimed by a panting urchin with freckles and a future!

There was dinner enough for an army, all bringing twice what was needed—pyramids of chicken and cake—tables were half a block long, and girls with long switches kept off the flies.

Then it was cleared away like a tumbler's mat in a circus, the surplus sent to the Orphans' Home, and thousands packed the court-house yard, waiting for the speeches.

"Father Post" looked the patriarch, offering prayer, and everybody stood for "The Star Spangled Banner."

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Perhaps too much was expected of United States Senator Bolivar. During his speech the crowd grew restless, and La Fayette Conrad, frontier debater, deliberately folded the hose of his ear-trumpet and sought a comfortable position.

A young clergyman was next introduced, principally because he had come "from a distance." His theme seemed to be the certainty of death, and insinuations were levelled at the aged to the effect that their persistence was reprehensible.

Closing with a description of the sinner's death-bed, the orator addressed Mr. Conrad: "My venerable friend, the issue is not, What riches have you garnered? but, What will you say on judgment day?"

It was too much; Mr. Conrad's wheat crop had been a failure and so,

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humped up in impatience and ancient broadcloth, he snapped back: "I've nothing prepared; I'll trust to the inspiration of the moment!"

Philip would come next on the programme, and while friends waved encouraging hands, nothing could banish the horror of it; it was like impending execution; thus far the audience had not clapped a hand, and with frigid extremities he thanked heaven that it would all be over in some way by night.

Then Colonel Hardy, possibly noting something which suggested the volunteer in his first skirmish, had Major McFaddin called.

The Major was brother to Happyville's mineral spring; men went wrong and wells went dry but these two sparkled on; both had always belonged to the town and always would. His

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face and head were a smooth, pink globe, and a mighty cheer broke forth as the smiling favorite arose, a stuffed wildcat under his arm.

The dean of local bachelors, he related woes with his "mother-in-law" till old ladies held their sides. His collar wilted, and drawing off a linen duster he cast it across the stage, without stopping the torrent of words, and there were shouts—it was a familiar performance. He related jokes on compatriots, reviewed their courtships, and dramatically traced Philander Threewits crossing the Alleghany Mountains, bringing the first night-shirt to the wilderness.

He told of log-rollings, barn-raisings, spelling-matches, and described a coon-hunt till one could almost hear the dogs. He lifted the marble-eyed wildcat from the stand for the peroration:

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“Come to my museum and see the things of ‘real days’—for it takes more than a sun to make a day. I’ve foxes and ‘painters’; I’ve war-clubs, arrows, feathers and paint; I’ve the under-jaw of a ‘catawampus,’ and the skulls of Black Hawk—both of them—the skull of Black Hawk when he was a young man, and the skull of Black Hawk just before he died!”

Wave after wave of laughter and cheers followed the Major to his chair.

After all, was it not worse for Philip than if he had followed “the cloth”? But such speculation ended; the chairman was bowing.

It was a marvellous greeting, not unlike a great clock at whose striking puppets nod, for to most of these people Philip was a stranger. A common spring seemed to lift him upright and turn thousands of heads in inquiring

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pantomime. Under such a spell it was child's play to empty the pitcher and upset the glass, while his masterpiece left for parts unknown.

Genius has gone below and enriched us with the groans of the lost, but she is too faint of heart to describe the pangs of budding speech when memory expires.

The young man had clandestinely placed several reminders behind a vase of poppies, but the breeze, with joyous eagerness, caught the oratorical life-preserver and gave it to the world; the last tie with the race was sundered; he was free!

To him the audience was a blurred composite, with one exception—a stout gentleman, standing at the very rear with flaming twins in his arms. Philip could not escape him; his eyes returned again and again till the gentleman's face assumed the dreadful aspect

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of a head at a midnight window—at any minute it might spread to the twins!

Little did the stout gentleman know the part he played, but it flashed upon the orator with a chill, then an all-pervading glow; it was a challenge to pull a wish-bone with Fate: “Hold him who holds the twins and claim your great desire!” Over his memory floated a vision of a beautiful girl. He shed his coat, and with the glittering eye of primitive man at bay, plunged in. The speech stood forth, line for line as written, and going along, he gathered wild flowers in the garden of presence of mind as a philosopher strolls in his grove.

Above the multitude soared mottled sycamores, whose rustling leaves of gold and brown wove sunlight into shadows, only to ravel them into sunlight again.

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Turning, after a while, to address gentlemen upon the stand, Philip found La Fayette Conrad, sitting with hand outspread to aid his trumpet. Oh, to have fallen at his feet! He was all benevolence, and over his wrinkled face danced a satisfaction which made one love him forever.

Applause is fine, but to know that one has only to pluck it, is finer. It was all over too soon. Michael Halfpap leaped to his feet, proposing three cheers; those upon the stage crowded round with wonderful words, and the audience called the orator back for a "tiger."

Then came an arrow memory; Philip arose—Glory! He had vanquished Fate; the gentleman with the twins stood, smiling at his post. Doubt was dead and Rapture crowned—the world was his—and the Incomparable!

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The band was playing "The Battle Cry of Freedom"; the thousands were singing as though it were an anthem of deliverance, while Colonel Hardy, every inch the soldier in the charge, stood leading the chorus with his cane.

All space fluttered with victory's countless wings. Such an instant may come but once; it is fleeting, yet long enough to overpay lifetime toil and sacrifice.

It comes when some patient watchman of the universe at last beholds the sudden light we call discovery, or the chance rock in some derided student's pathway tells the secret we know as science; it comes when with crust for marriage feast, some garret-king mates dream and rainbow and gives us art; but greater far than these, it comes when Fancy piles our planet high with the matchless gems of a lover's dream.

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Leaning back in the deep chair, this is what Philip seemed to see—again the “Cannon Ball” came and went; again the Incomparable buttoned the light travelling-coat to her chin and clasped the railing—but she was not alone. As they swept down the valley along the old tow-path, he pointed out the charred ribs of the canal-boat *Isabella*, on which Charles Dickens was once a guest, for in her day she was the pride of the “Red Bird Packet Line.” Now they turned to mark the trail up Echo Hollow whence the Iroquois departed; a little while and there were silver glimpses of waterfalls in Fitch’s Glen; then they passed beneath the still canopy of old trees, more slowly climbing the ridge, leaning with the sweeping river bend, lordly as a creator’s gesture. On in circling ascent they went till high in the distance, as

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if thrust forward by a giant's arm, the cliff glided into view—and with it Happyville—like some toy city, built of blocks, now touched with changing lights, as the sun shot his final arrow high, then flung his quiver off and sank upon a couch of amethyst; evening's calm tide swept up the valley far beneath and drifting with it, queer shadow ships, dragging their anchors.

The last words of "The Battle Cry of Freedom" floated away, the people rustled down into silence again—and Philip emerged from his dream.

There are trustful souls who adore a spirit which on our little stage is thought to time mortal entrances and exits, leading this way and that, raising barriers of sea and circumstance, not by way of whim or torment, as it would seem, but to set common lives to the stately metre of romance.

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No sooner had this phantom train crept round the edge of Signal Rock, than up from below came the stop-signal of the real "Cannon Ball," and those who recalled Philip's fire department episode turned smilingly toward the stage to find the young orator leaning forward alert.

The people listened while the engine puffed haughtily past the cliff. A little girl, all dressed for the part, was reciting "Barbara Frietchie" when hoofs clattered up from the station and men ran out, brandishing their arms. Around the corner flew a picturesque outfit, half in air—white mule with Roman nose, countenance aflame, as with remembered grievances of its kind; collar pressing its ears; harness patched with twine, spring wagon with dash kicked in, wheels which would have wobbled near collapse in ordinary

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travel; an old tramp-like man, bare-headed, with flying coat, tugging at the lines; and, most wonderful of all, beside him a veiled figure, head erect, disdainful, glorious—like Marie Antoinette riding to the guillotine.

With lightning intuition, Philip arose to leave the stand, but Colonel Hardy intervened, his concern most extraordinary, and when the mule subsided, he whispered with profound relief:

“Thank God—she isn’t hurt!”

“You know her?” Philip anxiously inquired.

The Colonel heeded not.

“You don’t display the same solicitude for the driver, Colonel?”

“Philip, you once promised anything I’d ask—banish those people from your memory forever!”

It was so frivolous, so foreign to his friend of iron, that the young man

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smiled; or was it at the thought that while the veiled figure's bearing had something in it far removed from Happyville, he should have associated the Incomparable with that flying scrap-
pile? It was profane—she who was possible in nothing less than a chariot!

It proved to be no time for levity.

“Don't laugh—please!”

The Colonel's agitation was greater than the day he had warned Philip in the office.

“Do you know,” he said in a little while, “scenes like that upset me—they suggest a battery going into action.” He fumbled the Loyal Legion button in his coat lapel; “Philip, that was a great speech—magnificent!”

Then another song floated forth—a little of the music of the spheres—
“God be with you till we meet again.”

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“Father” Post lifted his hands for the benediction, after which people surged toward the balloon ascension. The huge bag filled, tugging harder and harder at its ropes; an aeronaut in red tights scampered nimbly about, stumbling over youthful admirers. Then Newt Gillispie, chairman of sports, stepped forth:

“Ladies and Gentlemen: Louis Lavachela—King of the Air!”

The “king” extended both hands in a sweeping bow.

“Stand back!” cried Newt,

The patch of darkness shot skyward, Lavachela swinging from the trapeze in a maze of tricks. It arose till the whole thing was like a spider clinging to a pear, then a current of air bore it safely over the river, when the spider seemed to sink toward earth, and a sigh swept over the upturned faces.

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Something like a morning-glory upside down, spread out of nothingness above the spider and was wafted jauntily downward. The pear-like object above it turned and from its sides issued a thread of gray; then it collapsed, staggering in the sky, like an old hat tossed out of Jupiter in house-cleaning time.

Hundreds raced through the covered bridge to greet the aeronaut; buggies were backed, children called, farewells exchanged, and "Old Settlers' Day" was past.

They had walked to the foot of Philip's stairway before Colonel Hardy spoke: "Possibly I was a little rough back there." Then he continued, by way of justification: "If the young woman behind that mule will give the world in joy just a hundredth part of

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what the old man gave it in grief, she will be a saint—and I have every faith that she will. And if you will only let me have charge of this love affair—you will thank me some day. Since you hesitate, my young friend, I'll tell you I happen to be in charge of it this very minute; you could not find her in a thousand years!"

"Who was the old man?"

The Colonel struggled to appear indifferent. "Oh, just a man named Shanks—the only man I never speak to—and never can!"

"And the young woman?"

"Remember, Philip, I asked you to banish them from your mind forever!"

Within the hour numerous citizens turned toward Philip's office, but his door was locked against them as his mood was locked against felicitations.

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“Shanks!” “Shanks!” He repeated the name as if to beguile the air to solve the riddle. He sat by the window, and the hills rolled away into a sea of conjecture. The smoke from his corn-cob pipe curled into countless letters, “S.” He sat till the sun went down and the evening star came forth—and they both began with “S.”

“But no,” he soliloquized, “her name may be Stanley—or Stuart—something like that—but ‘Shanks’—that is unthinkable.”

CHAPTER III

PHILIP forgot his supper; he sat and watched the shadows widen into twilight and the twilight deepen into night. The thrill of triumph was in his heart; there was a tide in every finger-tip. He had not heeded a familiar step in the hall and did not turn till Michael Halfpap entered, his eyes more illumined than the lamp he bore.

“You’ve made the greatest speech Happyville ever heard; announce that you’re candidate for anything and it’s yours!”

A glow came over Philip’s face; he reflected how the Old Settlers had slept in the full oratorical glare of United States Senator Bolivar and a thought

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came tumbling down from the Mountains of Audacity—the great are only others far off!

“Mike!” he exclaimed; “you’re right—go tell Colonel Hardy!”

In the fulness of time, that is, next day, a public uprising—Colonel Hardy and M. Halfpap—entered Philip’s office.

The former had brushed his white hair back and his bearing bespoke a thirst for action. Striding to the window, he lifted his head imperiously. “Philip, do you want to go to Congress?”

Philip grew suddenly non-committal. “Why, Colonel, you bewilder me; my tastes are all in the line of my profession; I——”

“What!” demanded the warrior, striking the floor with his cane.

Michael’s gray eye suggested Evangeline in the alms-house; the brown one, Mirabeau in the Assembly.

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Philip arose, and paced the floor. "As I was about to say—here we have the two great parties: you, Colonel, stand for Republicanism, while Mr. Halfpap is the very embodiment of Democracy; this is, therefore, a national demand, and, fellow countrymen, I dare not retreat!"

And so it came to pass that a room eight by twelve, with floor in the nude, a virgin safe, a Titian stove, the most introspective of Lincolns, two Venus de Miloed chairs, and a candid vest in a broken window, ceased to be a bazaar of equitable relief.

After his "fellow countrymen" had departed, the freshly hewn Pillar of the Republic sat as if dazed, till a breeze blew the candid vest into his lap, when deftly replacing it, he locked the door.

Long years before, a Congressman had visited Philip's father; the children

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had eaten the evening meal in awe; they had all sat in the front row at the school-house meeting—and that stranger had become President!

A phantom struggled out of Half-pap's lamp, smiling as best a phantom could in a broken chimney.

The evening was growing cool; the "Pillar" sprang behind the mountain scene, returning with not one or two, but a whole armful of cigar-boxes—a friendly tradesman's contribution—and in an instant the stove was roaring.

An announcement is like a plunge into the river, and public opinion's "seven ages" are ever the same: first, boisterous laughter; second, doubt of genuineness; third, admonition that one may yet retire; fourth, reflection that it is a free country; fifth, assurance that it cannot be harmful; sixth,

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belief that there is a possibility of success, and seventh, eternal devotion from the start.

The Happyville "Ring," also the *Trumpet*, the official organ, were for Congressman Morrow. For twenty years he had kept what others wanted—a long time to commit the unpardonable sin—a feat calling for constant organization and dexterous manipulation of patronage, the Congressman's viewpoint of public affairs being the same from which the Alderney contemplates the clover crop.

There were six counties in the district and two candidates besides Morrow and Daniel—Judge Clark and "Commodore" Luke Bun, an auctioneer, both of whom had for many years sought to wrest from Morrow the constituency which he had the honor and nervous prostration to represent.

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The judge was sixty and ponderous, while the "Commodore," ten years his junior, was wiry and sad-visaged. Clark and Bun assured Philip that their real desire was to defeat Morrow, and promised to nominate him if neither of them could win after a "fair trial."

Philip had ridden day and night, canvassing by roadside and fireside, speaking in barns, mills, school-houses—wherever his peers assembled—and now with the primaries only one week away, he was confident of a solid county delegation, and if Clark and Bun held to their pledges, victory seemed assured.

"It is too good to be true," he observed to Colonel Hardy, as they sat in his office that night. "This situation is so plain that no man can be misled,

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yet the 'Ring' is confident. Our fight has been from the house-top—maybe there's water in the basement."

"Nonsense—it's all over but the shouting!"

They were rising to leave, when a rider galloped through the covered bridge and brought up beneath the window. Rain beat against the glass, and swaying street-lights cast long black lines over the town.

"Some fellow coming for the doctor," said Hardy, clasping his umbrella more tightly.

A cry came up from the curb, its anxiety seeming to blend with the complaining night-wind—"Whur's Dan'l's office?"

Philip raised the window, and a gust of rain swept across the room. An old man, mounted upon a white mule, held up a home-made lantern of tin, and

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through its irregular slits the light escaped in strange patterns.

“It’s ‘Old Settlers’ Day’ Shanks—mule and all!”

“He’s come ten miles—call him up—but I can’t see him.” The Colonel stepped into Halfpap’s room and closed the door.

The storm-beaten old fellow shuffled up the stairs and half ran down the hallway, the water dripping from his clothes and gurgling in his shoes. Placing the lantern upon the floor, he removed an ancient, funnel-shaped hat. The tramp of many seasons had worn away the boundary between its crown and brim. His face was sharp and pale and anxious. Out of breath, he brushed thin, white matted hair back from a brow, wrinkled and veined. A drop of rain swelled upon his cheekbone, then burst and trickled down his

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slanting face to the kind of a mouth men had in days of "Yes" and "No"—days of action—real men—miracles of heart and brain, wrought by trees and rivers and the sky—by peril, toil, and solitude.

His old, gray eyes were alert and prone to challenge objects rather than regard them; they hurriedly searched the room and the young man's face. Then a cry escaped the withered lips, "My God, Dan'l—who air you!" The bushy, silver brows contracted and Shanks peered hard into Philip's face. Advancing, he placed a trembling hand upon the candidate's temple, then stepped back, his face twitching as with pain.

To the young man standing against the window his guest seemed half mummy—half memory.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Shanks?"

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“Oh, I fergot—you put me so much in mind uv a boy I ust to know—it wuz a long time ago.” There was apology in his tone.

Then his eyes danced brightly. “Dan’l, I knew it wuz a lie, an’ ’at time wuz short—so I come to-night. It’s turrible out, I tell you; roads is orfel; Pigeon Crick bridge gone out—had to ford—nearly went over the dam.”

Tapping Philip’s breast with a bony finger, Shanks leaned close and whispered with glee: “They’re both at my place now—the ole toll-gate at Pisgah, you know—and they’re drunk as b’iled owls. They druv up four hour ago—Spotts, ’at runs the *Trumpet*, an’ ’nuther feller; they wuz a-comin’ back from Bowser’s Mill; storm hit ’em an’ they ast to stay all night. I put up their horse an’ they set by the

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fire, an' fin'ly Spotts fetched a bottle out an' they swigged an' talked an' made fun o' you, an' fin'ly Spotts pointed to a bundle a-layin' by the fire an' says he: 'Purty cute o' me a-havin' 'em printed at Bowser's Mill—no danger uv it gittin' out ahead o' time.'

“Well, Spotts kep' a-soakin' his hide an' a-tellin' how smart he wuz, an' at last he fetched a bill out uv his pocket an' read out loud, an' they laughed like fools an' says: 'We'll beat Dan'l a million miles!' Purty soon they went to sleep, an' I got up an' found the bill on the floor—an' I slipped out—an' hyere I am. They're goin' to put one uv 'em in every *Trumpet* the morning the delegates is to be made an' send 'em to the country. Spotts says he: 'All we have to do is to bust a hole in this county.'”

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Shanks unbuttoned his coat and a folded newspaper fell from round his waist.

“Let it go, Dan’l. It’s jist my underwear.

“Hyere it is,” he drew a folded slip from the lower of two vests.

Philip read, then mopped his forehead and read aloud for the benefit of the Colonel:

“PHILIP DANIEL RETIRES

“At the threshold of what promised to be a victorious campaign, Mr. Philip Daniel discovers that he is not old enough to go to Congress and hereby authorizes the *Trumpet* to announce his retirement from the race.

“When seen last night, Mr. Daniel regretted the matter, more on account of his friends than anything else, and said: ‘I have no ambition now but the success of the Party, and I believe that it demands the renomination of our

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faithful representative. Therefore I ask my friends to select delegates who will vote for Capt. Philetus Morrow.”

Philip gazed at his strange deliverer in silence, and a smile painted his astonishment over into gratitude. “God bless you, Mr. Shanks!”

“I’m fer you, Dan’l, an’ after you win mebbe you kin help me with my claim ag’in’ the gov’ment—it’s sacred-like, but ‘Republics is ungrateful,’ you know. I done sumpin’ onct, the like o’ which wuz never heerd tell uv; I’ll give you full charge; I’ll make you the most talked-uv man in the United States o’ North Ameriky!”

Grasping the old fellow’s hand, Philip declared with an earnestness which betrayed his fears: “I’ll do anything I can!”

“Then I’ll see you at my ’stablishment at two o’clock the afternoon yer

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term begins," said Shanks, wrapping the folded newspaper round his waist.

Something in his optimism caused Philip to start.

"Don't," pleaded Shanks. "Yer lookin' at me now like they all do. I'm queer, but it ain't all the time—I've jist got Aprile weather in my head—it tilts a little now an' then—I kin allus see it comin' like a squall over the water. Brain gits dark an' wavy-like an' rocks till everything breaks an' the racket skeers the camels—God on'y knows how many they is—an' they run round an' round an' kick sand in yer eyes—an' the clouds git off o' their rollers an' tear the leaves off o' the trees an' knock the fruit down 'fore it's ripe. It's turrible, Dan'l, when the wind blows up frum the South!"

Once more he sprang to place a hand on Philip's temple: "Do it ag'in, Dan'l—luk that way—no, you can't, I cahi-

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late—it wuz round hyere like—the eyes—you lukt like him more'n ever—God A'mighty, he wuz han'some—nuthin' like me—favored his mother.

“I've allus wondered what he'd 'a' come to—it 'ud 'a' been sumpin' grand, I know, an' when I read o' yer comin' out fer Congress, they wuz sumpin' 'bout you that made me think o' him, an' though I never seen you, I sez to my ole dog, sez I: 'Button, we'll all be fer Dan'l.'”

The mist suddenly melted from the old man's mind, his eyes grew steady, and stepping forward, he placed both hands on Philip's shoulders and smiled, as though he had been playing a part. When finally he spoke, it was slowly, but with strange authority.

“Dan'l, you kin do me a turrible favor; you kin let me belong to the worl' ag'in; I'm all right, you see; let me do it—nominate you fer Congress—it'll be

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like doin' it fer him. I kin handle that wind—I won't let it blow up frum the South—'pon my word, Dan'l; I'll hold it hyere in the hollow o' my hand an' choke it!" He closed his fist till the knuckles snapped. "Tell you what I'll do!" His eyes lighted with triumph. "I'll have *her* come; it can't blow when she's with me—the Lord made her to order, Dan'l!"

He held the lantern up before Philip's face as though they were standing in the dark, and the latter marvelled at the cry of this old man's soul. He seemed to hold it in his hand to save or cast away; he looked into the keen, gray eyes which now seemed to expand and contract, and he thought of another hermit—one who once led a crusade. Then he did what kings and philosophers have done every day since the sun was made and will do every day

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till the sun grows cold—he did the wildest thing in earth’s fantastic range of follies—he chose an old fellow with April weather in his head to place him in nomination before a great convention, and as he did so, the boards creaked in the adjoining room and he thought of his campaign manager—and Shanks was the man he should have banished from his mind forever!

“I must go back!” declared the old man, with an enthusiasm which laughed at years.

“No—you will go with me; I’ll care for your beast;” remonstrated Philip, and arm in arm they went to the American House.

Shanks straightened till six feet of stature came strangely forth from the odds and ends of his body, then registered in a staggering hand: “Shanks uv Pisgah Hill, formerly uv Vicksburg.”

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“Give my friend the bridal chamber,” commanded Philip.

The orator turned and clasped the candidate’s hand, looked calmly into his face, then smiling, said: “Dan’l, I like you more an’ more.”

“I surrender,” cried Philip, returning to the office.

“Don’t worry; he’s saved us, we’ll handle the speech some way.”

“Do you know, Colonel, all the time Shanks was talking, a memory kept coming up, like a bubble from the bottom of the sea, and it has reached the surface this very minute. Old Settlers’ Day wasn’t the first time I saw Shanks; I saw you together the first time I saw either of you. It was the day the Soldiers’ Monument was unveiled—the day General Grant came to town. You were chairman of the meeting, and Shanks fought his way to the stand

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and shook the hero's hand and there was a disturbance of some kind to get him away, and later, as the crowd was going home, he mounted the courthouse steps and began speaking. The crowd was laughing and shouting when you came and stood by his side. You were furious; you waved your cane and said something like this: 'Fellow citizens, if we must be brutal, let us fly at each other's throats, but let us not laugh at each other's infirmities!' I was reading fables then, and as the crowd slunk away, you reminded me of the lion speaking to the wolves."

"Yes, I remember; Shanks was telling his marvellous dream of the Civil War."

"That's what he means by the wind blowing up from the South—that's why he registers from Vicksburg?"

"Yes, that's it."

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“What unbalanced him?”

“That isn’t exactly the word, Philip.”

“Tell me more of my orator.”

“Once upon a time, there was a man who asked another to forget all about an old fellow he saw in a runaway and though he didn’t mean to do it, that other forgot this request and made that old man his master. But it’s all right; I might have done the same if he had talked to me that way—come, let’s go; it’s only two minutes till to-morrow.”

Shanks’s exposure enabled Philip to utterly rout the “Ring” by exploding the trick in a series of public meetings, and Spotts, of the *Trumpet*, left for the West, “to attend the bedside of a favorite aunt.”

Driving home through the warm starlight from the last of these indignation

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rallies, Philip grew nervous as they approached Pisgah Hill. It was the time appointed to cancel the oratorical engagement with Shanks. He and the Colonel had lavished their ripest wits upon a plan. Through the window they saw the old man engaged in an earnest appeal. A little nearer they paused. He was addressing many people—more by many hundred fold than could have possibly crowded into his little room, and yet he was alone save for Button, the dog, lying full length before the fireplace.

There was rapt attention on the part of the unseen audience in the buggy.

After a pause, Shanks declaimed his speech again.

The sentences flowed one after the other, even and natural as waves; they were quaint and musical and full of power, and at the end Hardy said:

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“Fate has sent you a queer orator, but I believe the best she has—drive on!

“I’m sorry I can never speak to him, but his place is at the head of the column—he shall march by my side—if he will.”

As they rolled past the half-open door, Shanks was lighting a corn-cob pipe, and after a little while, when Philip turned, he saw a tall figure standing upon the portico of the toll-house, holding up a queer tin lantern.

CHAPTER IV

EACH of the four candidates received the solid support of his county, the two counties having no candidates dividing their votes. A great circus tent was pitched in the Hilltown Park and head-quarters were at the Sunlight Hotel, where, ascending the stairs, one's eye met Judge Clark's room, only to be summoned away by "Commodore" Bun's gayly decorated parlor; Congressman Morrow came next, and then Philip's palatial establishment, where the hall ended in a wide arch.

Morrow soon called upon Daniel and observed:

"Wait and see if these gentlemen merely wish to defeat me, as they claim."

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It was so inspiring; everybody watched everybody else.

Philip displayed high statesmanship by writing a speech behind a screen while his reception committee explained that he was calling on a blind man. His masterpiece began: "In a republic, the office should always seek the man!" It was arranged for victory or defeat; it was of flute-like construction; by removing one piece, it turned from an acceptance to an endorsement of another's nomination.

What a night it was before the battle! There were roses and flags, orchestras and glee clubs, while a sea of children—most of them prospective candidates—swept along with the rest. It was fine to recall incidents of the canvass with scores who passed, and Philip made a vote by remembering the name of an old gentleman and asking what

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he received for the load of hay on top of which he had met him six weeks before.

His bed was a fitting period to it all, a thoughtful partisan having draped it with horseshoes of all descriptions.

Next morning's "specials" brought multitudes, and Happyville's was glorious as it marched down the hill, Colonel Hardy and Shanks in the lead, swinging their canes like gallants out for a stroll. Then came the delegates with long ribbon badges, and after them throngs of shouting friends from all parties, interspersed with bands and drum corps. On the balcony of the Sunlight, Philip reviewed them and turned to Michael Halfpap with thumping heart:

"How handsome one's friends are!"

"Yes. And there's something you will never see again—that banner,

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‘Daniel and Harmony,’ and walking behind it, side by side, Hardy and Shanks, who haven’t spoken for forty years.”

The whole town soon surged one way, and a platform for two thousand faced the delegates, who were surrounded by rising seats.

Each candidate received a fine reception, and the one moment of harmony—the invocation—was followed by a clash when Slateman, one of the “anti-Morrows,” was made chairman.

Nominating speeches were eagerly awaited, and among the thousands, alert to every phase of the coming battle, there was speculation regarding the identity of an old gentleman who sat in the front row upon the stage. His smooth, eagle face was ashy. Thin, white hair fell over his ears, and behind one of them he had hooked a

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long wisp which crossed his furrowed brow. The throat was seamed and shrunken like an old husk. His keen eyes sparkled over the fanning, whispering multitude; now and then they sought an object across the tent, and finding it, a light would sweep his face. That odd, long "Prince Albert" coat might have been his wedding garment. Half collapsed in a chair, the white vest rose above the open collar. His legs were crossed, the basic foot tapping the stage, now in time with the band, now with his own lively fancies. The peculiar habit of knitting his bushy brows was never more noticeable. Once a young lady interrupted his meditations to tender a palm-leaf fan, and later another subjected him to embarrassment by pinning a bouquet upon his lapel. In thanking her, he blushed and bowed till the long

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wisp of hair fell from behind his ear, and in replacing it he disarranged the entire mantle till it stood like bristles.

He was flintlock to the core; he seemed a kinsman of Liberty Bell.

Philip took the chair beside him. "How's the speech?"

"Tol'able." He smiled calmly. "Tol'able."

The others were placed in nomination, but it was merely trained eloquence—a thing that regards commas rather than cause.

"Cass County!" the chairman called at last.

Colonel Hardy arose with dignity and bowed toward the gentleman in the old "Prince Albert" coat. "Mr. Milton Shanks will speak for us."

The latter drew himself out of the chair, link by link; speculation ceased;

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delegates and spectators arose and cheered; it was the tribute of the new heart to the old.

Others had spoken with vehemence, but as the tall, slender form straightened, a voice of grandfatherly benevolence came into the atmosphere of strife.

“Gentlemen uv the Convention:

“History ’ud indicate ’at it’s bin as hard to make a feller big enough to mind his own affairs as to make a Shakespeare, but mebbe tyrants is jist sent out to wake nations up. We know that without the fellers we hate, we wouldn’t ’a’ bin worth our salt—we wouldn’t ’a’ had no spunk.”

The tone grew stronger; the right hand left his pocket; the head lifted with assurance; the convention leaned forward in curious admiration.

“I’m glad England wuz turrible.

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"I thank her fer the fire an' sense o' '76.

"I thank her fer Washin'ton, in whose eye hungry fellers could see a country o' their own.

"An' so I'm glad the Union *had* to be saved!

"It's not fer us to ast empty sleeves if they wuz sincere ner women 'at prayed ag'in' each other—but off with our hats to all that had grit."

He paused for some seconds.

"You've made a platform—I couldn't hyear it all but I know it's right. The party 'at's in kin on'y go on, an' the party 'at's out kin on'y pull back—I cahilate they're 'bout the same, but I didn't ust to.

"We want the guv'ment to do its part an' the folks to do theirn.

"We want a tariff to pectect us—not to rob us.

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“We want a dollar worth a hundred cents.

“We want an army like we’ve got—one ’at raises corn between wars—not a standin’ army—’at jist stands around.

“We want a navy big enough to let us sleep in peace; I’d ruther see ships rust than have a chimbley shot off o’ any hut by the sea—I’d give my ’stablishment to wipe out the burnin’ o’ my Capitol a hundred year ago.”

For the instant he was a Spartan, then stepped forward, slowly fanned with the palm-leaf, and solicitude came into his voice as, with the charm of reminiscence, he concluded:

“My candidate stands fer these things; he’s able; he wants to go ahead; we want him to, an’ he will, sure as ‘kingdom come’!

“He’s Philip Dan’l, o’ Happyville!

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“I tole him onct I’d like to see what he’d come to an’ I hope you won’t make me wait too long—I’m seventy-five las’ June.”

A smile and the orator concluded; he had spoken little more than a minute. From first to last his gaze had been directed to a point among the spectators, high above the delegates; his eyes were riveted with such intensity, it was as if something there gave him the power of speech. As he resumed a chair, the silence which had attended him seemed to increase, then it was indescribable. As they cheered on, refusing to be silenced by the bands, the venerable gentleman merely knitted his brows and kept time, then half covered his face with a toil-knotted hand.

“Glorious!” Philip shouted, placing his hand to the hero’s ear.

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“Luk way out yander by that pole, Dan’l!” he replied, pointing a long, bony finger, whereupon a woman in a deep poke-bonnet waved a handkerchief.

“She done it, Dan’l—she kep’ that wind off o’ me!”

“Who in the world?”

“My gran’mother, Dan’l.” A smile flickered round the old man’s mouth.

“I must meet her!”

“Not now, Dan’l—some time, mebbe. Whur’s my hat?—they’s a train—I can’t do nuthin hyere an’ I can’t stan’ this infernal racket!”

The applause was ebbing away as he and the woman in the poke-bonnet arose.

“Remember, Dan’l—that claim—two o’clock sharp, the day yer term begins.”

The Happyville delegates gave the old fellow an ovation as he passed, and

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there was an incident noted only by a few—Colonel Hardy extended his hand and Shanks grasped it with surprise. For a second they gazed silently into each other's faces, then Shanks went on. At the edge of the crowd the woman in the poke-bonnet took his arm.

Then the tent was suddenly touched with magic; to its most interested soul, he whose future lay in its hand, this thousand-tongued monster, called a convention, which played with human plans, was strangely hushed. Heads, voices, flags, hopes, were instantly resolved into merest specks floating in a shaft of radiance flashing in upon the stage. The woman in the poke-bonnet loosened its strings as if to cool her throat, then she pushed it half back as if to tempt the sun from fields less golden, and it hurried down to ripple in her hair and gild the anxious beauty

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of her girlish face. She clung to the scene by the last finger-tip till Shanks impatiently tapped her arm, and then the Incomparable waved farewell to the Hope of Happyville.

There was little difference among the votes. The day was warm; the sides of the tent walled with people; ice-water and fan merchants prospered, and men removed their coats when Slateman made a facetious ruling on the subject. For the first hour there was anxiety, but after fifty ballots the crowd leaned back for a tug-of-war.

Finally Colonel Hardy mounted a chair.

“For what purpose does the gentleman rise?” demanded Slateman.

“To explain what we are about to do.”

A whisper flashed round the tent—
“Morrow has won—Clark and Bun

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are to be punished for not having nominated Daniel."

"We are devoted to our candidate," Hardy began, "but so are other gentlemen, and having cast the solid vote of this county not one but one hundred times, we feel——"

"Don't you dare!" shouted a spectator, shaking his fist and starting general clamor.

Without looking, Philip knew that Morrow was smiling, and in the distance saw radiant "Ringsters" from home.

The decision must be unanimous; none of the delegates would look toward the stage.

Colonel Hardy stood as if posing, and when the tumult subsided, concluded his remarks:

"I was about to say, Mr. Chairman, we have decided to vote for Philip Daniel a million times if necessary!"

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The demonstration which greeted Hardy rivalled that accorded his ancient foe.

After a while the gavel was yielded to different vice-chairmen, and when thus honored, Judge Sims, a Morrow leader, promised to end the deadlock at once. "It is very easy," he declared. "Let us cast our united votes for Captain Philetus Morrow!"

For an instant it was blinding, then all stood and howled, the more enraged overturning benches in an effort to reach the stage. With blanched face, the judge protested, but neither man nor gavel could be heard and riot was imminent, when Slateman scrambled over the mass and resumed the chair.

Without looking, Philip knew that Morrow was not smiling.

With the five-hundredth ballot, a band played "Hot Time," and every-

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body arose and stretched and sang.
The lights blazed and received a cheer.

Then the wind lifted the tent in great billows, lightning flashed; the sultry day's prophecy was being fulfilled.

Despite volunteers clinging to them, great poles leaped into the air, crashing the arc lamps, rain streamed through the canvas, and thousands stood, holding chairs above their heads.

A delegate moved to adjourn, but a band quickly struck up: "We won't go home till morning."

But for lightning the tent was long dark, yet nobody left and it was lively with song and burlesque, the latter including mock speeches of withdrawal for all candidates.

Business resumed with a vote of thanks for the "rain-proof" shelter, and the struggle lasted till three hours past midnight, when adjournment was

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taken, Philip's memory returning to the day Judge Clark and "Commodore" Bun had explained their real desire to be the defeat of Congressman Morrow.

The "Sunlight" was carpeted with patriots; Colonel Hardy slept at the jail, and the occupants of Philip's bed were exceeded only by its horseshoes.

It seemed but a wink till, waking, the young candidate found the room filled with smoke and stratagem.

"How do you feel?" asked the delegates.

"The outlook is perfect—but you gentlemen are free."

Then an old farmer took the floor and determined the programme.

"I've had two hours' sleep in the band-stand at the park and I'm fresh as a daisy; I move that we never quit votin' and that every 'mother's son of us' march into that tent with jaws

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clamped so everybody can read a declaration of war!"

The chaplain of the second session must have expected to officiate at the first, else he would not have implored the delegates to "approach their task with deliberation."

The balloting started as before. In a few minutes, Colonel Hardy rushed down the main aisle with upraised cane, after a pickpocket who had robbed him of one hundred dollars. In hot pursuit he turned at the edge of the tent in time to see a disloyal alternate delegate, empowered to vote in his absence, slipping into his chair to break the delegation. A longing glance at the fading thief and Hardy rushed back to seize the alternate by the collar and remove him to a place of safety.

After an hour, Judge Clark and "Commodore" Bun suggested that

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Philip cast lots with them, but believing his prospects brightening, he spurned the proposal on "high moral grounds." The two then decided to give each other a combined vote, but gesticulated so earnestly in determining who should receive it first, that a dog filled the tent with vociferous barking. The result was ineffectual, and after being tossed back and forth, the delegates were dangerous to trifle with.

Clark and Bun retired for consultation; there was no sign, but the air grew suddenly electric; thousands stood.

"Prepare for the ten-hundred-and-twelfth ballot," slowly called Slateman.

"Baxter" County failed to get the word in time to vote for Daniel—there were few delegates to spare and another ballot might be fatal.

"Cass County."

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Colonel Hardy announced Philip's twenty-two as if nothing could possibly be important.

Sixty-nine were needed.

"Greene County." It remained with Morrow.

"Hunter County." These were Bun's delegates.

"Twenty-one votes for Daniel."

A band started to play, but was silenced.

"Maumee County."

"Ten for Daniel."

Baxter and Maumee started a procession which Cass and Hunter joined, planting their standards with Judge Clark's delegation, whose votes would be decisive.

"Washington County."

Its chairman, with words of fate, mounted a table, and a half-frantic throng lifted it to their shoulders.

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“Washington County gives Philip Daniel twenty votes—all she has—and nominates him for Congress!”

Countless flags appeared, decorations were stripped from pole and side wall; all the bands and drum corps played at once; Philip was lifted upon the shoulders of wild men; delegates marched together; former rivals threw their arms around each other, and the defeated candidates pinned Daniel badges upon their coats and made the result unanimous.

All the way home, musically inclined gentlemen “Marched through Georgia,” and though Philip needed ironing, handshaking continued till the train rounded the cliff into Happyville, when out of the falling night issued strange lights and then a wonderful serpent of gold wriggled high above the steeples, where its head burst into countless stars.

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Half carried to where the old family horse leaped with fear, the nominee was pitched into the saddle.

Clear to the Soldiers' Monument it was a range of flame and color, and like a snow-storm turned to gold, a sea of flakes sifted through the purple air. Along the curbs, streams of changing fires burned even with the advancing hosts. Wagon batteries hissed; every belfry rang its greeting; whistles added to the pandemonium till no sounds were distinguishable, save those of minute-guns at the western point of the cliff. There was no order, nor should have been. There they were—smiling, singing, shouting, dancing; Republicans, Democrats, Populists, Prohibitionists; whites, blacks, preachers, pagans—everybody—the town, upside down—beside herself—wild!

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Above heads so closely packed it seemed the part of ease to walk upon them, floated the day's transparencies, and the faithful delegation required protection from its friends.

Philip was constantly turning in response to the tempest of greetings, but in looking for one face, he but half saw the thousands. First he sought it along the wall of the "Old Cemetery," now whiter with its dresses than its marbles; then his eyes swept the library steps—the high school; they searched the painted, undulating, half-delirious throng on every side—but in vain.

Once there was danger of a panic; it was when the street-wide torrent surged before the high banks of Philip's home, a rambling, white house—a light in every window—in the midst of gnarled and twisted apple-trees, now hung with paper lanterns.

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The doors were open; children ran through the wide hall and out upon the high portico, an endless line brought greetings to a time-silvered soul and were repaid with wit and smile which had gone up years as steep as slant, toward heaven's grace.

The instinctive gallantry of the multitude responded; the man on horseback was forgotten; the home-coming paused while this woman in black silk and white lace, with rocking-chair for throne, held her court where a flag rippled above and honeysuckle flung its fragrance away as if in its last blooming hour.

None of the white-dressed throng were more animated; nothing escaped her; indeed, she found time to wander a lifetime away where there were covered wagons and deer, and later a day when soldiers had come home from a

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great war. Yes, it was like that—only all were happy to-night.

Into her arms a child now placed a sheaf of roses as red as Nature's blood could make; her face grew radiant, and rising, she waved them like a girl. The crowd was hushed—and the old horse tried to leave the procession.

On to the court-house they swept, where every hero had to speak. They were reluctant to disperse and rockets shot over into another day.

A few neighbors were waiting when Philip and Michael reached the Daniel home.

"I'm so thankful to the good Lord that it came in my time," said the Lady of the Portico, coming down the steps to meet them.

"I feel as if I wanted to do something for everybody as everybody has done for us. But come along to the

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dining-room—I must show you something.”

The table was heaped with flowers.

“Isn’t it divine to be alive!” exclaimed Halfpap.

“Yes—but see!” She held up the wonderful sheaf of red roses.

“There’s the strangest card somewhere with no name to it, but it’s a woman’s hand. Oh, here it is, listen—‘For Demosthenes’s mother.’ Now, who in all this broad land do you suppose—why, Philip, what’s the matter?”

CHAPTER V

HAPPYVILLE did not set its alarm-clock for next morning and veteran compatriots of the lark slept till nine o'clock. It is not extravagant to affirm that such wholesale pillow depravity had never held the place in its clutches. One inhabitant, however, stirred earlier than usual. His eyes opened upon a new world; the day came out of the east eagerly as delight, and entering Philip's bedroom, roused the roses of its faded wall-paper to former brightness. That waking was worth all his life before. He had drifted from a dream of silver into a dawn of gold; it was like a thousand mornings bidding him to old fishing-trips; it was pris-

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matic as ecstasy; fragrant of fulfilment. Actuality walked through his brain like a lord; repressed longings thronged forth to claim their own, and out from her mystic treasure-house, Memory flung the treasured visions of days gone by. The light, stretching in a shutter pattern across the floor, had a sun-beam from every happy hour he had known; he was at once all ages he had ever been.

From fine excess he stretched and said: "He was a prophet who called this Happyville."

With that license so common in a republic, a fly made bold to light upon the youthful statesman's face, and he brushed it aside with a gentleness which the philosopher could have ascribed to nothing less than the chastening touch of an abiding love.

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A newsboy's cry came up from the street: "Extra *Trumpet*—all about the convention—all about Daniel!"

"Fame," he murmured, smiling.

The wonderful sheaf of red roses was in the centre of the table and the Lady of the Portico wore her silvery crown more lightly than ever. Breakfast passed with radiant glances—flowers of understanding which jest at words.

He was two hours in reaching his office; every gate had its waiting group, and as he sped along on air, little children whispered: "There he goes!"

Beneath the slanting glass roof, a throng of admirers awaited.

With thoughts swarming about a poke-bonnet, he reflected: "Why wait till my term begins? I'll take up Shanks's claim this very day!"

Up the sidewalk, a newspaper, widely opened, diverted pedestrians from their

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course, and behind it walked the Warwick of Happyville.

“Advance and give the counter-sign!” called Philip.

“Which way?” inquired Colonel Hardy.

“Pisgah!”

“Why, you’re not due till next March!”

“I know, but after that speech of Shanks’s, I feel it my duty to——”

“Tut, tut, Philip.” The Colonel’s penetrating eye punctured the explanation. “Go ahead. But wait, I’m going to ‘surprise’ you to-night—a little supper at my room—just twenty-five of the ‘Old Guard.’” A few steps more and the Colonel turned.

“Damn it, Philip, give Shanks my regards and tell him to come to the party!”

He would find them just in time for dinner, Philip reflected, spinning out

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of town like a courier. He would sit at the Incomparable's right, of course; she would be looking for him as surely as April looks for rain. He carefully surveyed his new clothes; the elegance of four generations looked down upon him, from the old watch with gold face and massive chain to the rose which he had plucked from the wonderful sheaf. He would hear Shanks's story as soon as possible, and take the Incomparable for a drive. She had inspired him with ambition; she had enabled Shanks to win laurels as his orator; the thread of her life had been woven into the fabric of his own in a fashion as beautiful as it was mysterious—and had he not won her on Old Settlers' Day, when he pulled that wish-bone with Fate?

He dusted his eloquence and resolved to do or die at the foot of the hill, where

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Pigeon Creek splashed through sharp rocks and steep banks waved with ferns and columbine. Should he do it while driving out or back? That would be for mature reflection—every step must evolve its own strategy. Most likely she would come to the door. Should he call her Christian name? What was it?—what was her surname?

He grew exceedingly hot.

While dining, should he appear blithe or pensive? He decided to be blithe; this would inspire the instinct of unrest and enable him by lightning gallantry in the buggy to storm the violet battlements and plant the frayed banner of affection where rapture would nestle in its folds forevermore.

He snapped the whip at a bumblebee.

Who in the world was she?

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He grew exceedingly cold.

After all, that was merely incidental; they had loved each other always—he had seen her twice. It would be far different if they were strangers—if he had seen her only once.

How should he begin? There was a line in the “Rubaiyat” which he liked; still, her Christian teaching might find offence in that rhapsody of doubt. Again, she might be familiar with the passage and he was uncertain just how it ran!

Nearing the destination, he saw a house in course of construction. Of course—he would start with a discussion of architecture, declaring for a colonial porch and a hall in the centre. Moonlit hours with gentle souls had convinced him that they leaned Colonially. In the event she preferred “Queen Anne,” he would yield—yes,

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she could even have alcoves! Then he would touch lightly on Fate, thus turning the edge of impulsive haste—everybody knew how busy Fate was.

Most of the toll-houses were gone, their common end being to serve the highest bidder for smoke-house or summer kitchen, but the one at Pisgah had survived the advent of free roads. From down the pike, Philip saw Shanks sitting beneath the landmark's projecting beak. He was smoking a pipe, and a rusty cat made endless figure eights around his carpet slippers. A rickety bench leaned against the shack; the porch floor was filled with splinters, and wide cracks facilitated the cricket serenade beneath. The pipe had that potency which age alone imparts to human institutions. It would have been difficult for the Hilltown conven-

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tion to recognize its orator; the splendor of two days before was hopelessly lost. Brown trouser-legs extended beneath others which once were gray, and the vests were buttoned alternately or not at all. Over these was a corduroy coat which the true hunter wears whether afield or asleep. There was a sartorial happiness in this heap of yesterdays, never found in a parlor, since one could not imagine wearer and garments as ever apart, while any addition—a cravat, for instance, round his standing flannel collar—would have been as grotesque as a skirt upon the shell-bark hickory tree across the road.

Philip had pictured the old man as he had sat upon the stage, and this transformation filled him with strange disappointment. Standing in momentary contemplation, he had a sudden dread, for not only had the daguerro-

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type become the scrap-pile, but something gray flitting over the nervous face warned him that the "wind was blowing from the south."

All was silent within the house; a cloud passed over Philip's spirits—the Incomparable had not expected him.

Inserting a thumb into the bowl of his pipe and puffing vigorously, Shanks plunged into the issue at hand.

"Wheat's jumpin'; you kin 'most see it; warm rain last night; blackbirds bin a-kitin' north all day; glad it's spring, Dan'l; older a feller gits, gladder he's apt to be.

"Settin' out hyere a-smokin' like makes me think o' Vicksburg—it's all as fresh as yisterday. You see, I'd bin a-settin' round waitin' fer Grant to do sumpin', an' fin'ly I sez to myself: 'If anything's did hyere, Shanks, you'll haf to do it yerself.'

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“I didn’t want to be hard on Grant an’ I sez, easy-like: ‘Why you bin foolin’ round?’

“I recollect’ how he turned; he wuz a-settin’ on a camp-stool; an’ sez he: ‘Shanks, what do you cahilate?’

“‘I’d do sumpin’!’ sez I.

“He smoked on a bit, but I seen that it took holt like, an’ he up an’ sez he: ‘My God, Shanks, why ain’t you tole me this ’fore now?—it’s the on’y plan!’

“Well, I went back expectin’ big things, but nuthin’ wuz did, an’ there I wuz ‘a-champin’ o’ the bit,’ as the feller sez, an’ I went back, an’ ’fore I could say a word, Grant up ag’in an’ sez he: ‘Shanks, I’m cahilatin’ hard—gimme three days—I won’t ast ’nuther favor.’

“An’ so time went by an’ nuthin’ come of it, an’ at last, one day ’fore sun-up, I put on my hat an’ walked out o’ camp an’ kep’ on goin’ till there I wuz

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in front o' Vicksburg—an' then the whole shebang blazed away; they wuz shells an' minies an' chain-shot, an' one of 'em tuk off my hat.

"I never knowed what fear wuz—Shankses wuz all that way, never much fer money but a heap fer spunk—an' sez I to myself: 'I'll jist let 'em egshaust their amminition.'

"But the Johnnies seen my scheme an' things quieted down till they wuzn't more'n fifty guns a-trained on me, I cahilate, an' then a signal went up frum Vicksburg a-sayin': 'Cease firin'—it's Shanks hisself!'

"Well, I set down, an' purty soon a passel o' fellers come a-ridin' out o' the town an' I up an' rekonized Pemberton—Gin'rul, you know—an' when he got within talkin' range, he up an' sez he: 'Shanks, ain't it 'bout time me an' you wuz endin' this?'

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“I wanted to feel him out, an’ a-drawin’ myself up, sez I: ‘Pemberton, you ain’t a bad feller, but if you don’t end it quick, I’m goin’ to do sumpin’.’

“Lordy, how it bit him—bit him to the quick—an’ sez he: ‘Shanks, don’t hit a feller when he’s down—yer plan’s the on’y one I been afeerd uv, an’ I cahilate they’s nuthin’ left but to give up.’

“‘I’d ’a’ tole you as much,’ sez I—‘on’y I wuz afeerd you’d think I wuz préjudiced like.’

“Fin’ly he up an’ sez he: ‘Shanks, I allus noticed you don’t carry no staff—the boys has of’en wondered why it wuz.’

“‘Well,’ sez I, ‘if you want to go some’er’s, you allus haf to wait fer ’em to fix up, an’ then ag’in they make too much racket—I do my best work a-slippin’ round—a-bein’ at large like.’

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“‘I never seen it that way ’fore now,’ sez he.

“An’ he called up a saplin’ all covered with fancy-work, an’ sez he: ‘Tell the whole pack to clear out.’

“Then I heerd sumpin’, an’ we got up an’ looked behind some bushes an’ there stood Grant. Mad! Well, I cahilate.

“‘Grant,’ sez I, ‘you don’t do nuthin’ but smoke, an’ then you hang round when some other feller tries to do sumpin’.’

“He got red like. ‘Shanks,’ sez he, ‘I don’t want no hard feelin’s; I jist come out to look fer you. We knowed you’d keep on a-goin’ an’ the army got skeered bein’ left alone—but I don’t want to interrup’ yer conversation with yer friend.’

“I had to interduce him; Pember-ton didn’t ketch the name at first; then

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I give Grant a luk an' he walked off a piece an' stood there a-hackin' jimpson weeds with his sword, an' then he called me over. 'Shanks,' sez he, 'I bin a-thinkin' if yer goin' to do sumpin' mebbe you'd better take my badge.' But I wouldn't tech it—no, sir!

"When we wuz alone, Pemberton sez he: 'I bin a-diggin' with that army till I've got 'tached to it—but,' sez he, 'it 'pears like rain—let's call the whole business off!'

"An' we shuk hands.

"When I wuz off 'bout forty rod, he called back an' sez he: 'Shanks, would it be legal uv a public holiday?'

"An' that's how we fixed the Fourth o' July."

Throughout the recital, Philip had listened with an ear bent toward the half-open door, but all was silent.

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Shanks refilled his pipe and resumed: "I wouldn't take his sword. I'll never fergit how that fetched him; he choked up like an' sez he: 'Shanks, yer more'n a man o' action; yer a man o' feelin's; I'd like to have you know my folks.'

"An' that's my claim, Dan'l. I ain't heerd a word uv it fer a long time—Presidents all seem to have sumpin' ag'in' me personal like—I give you full charge—an' that's all."

Philip surveyed him sadly and promised to do his best, then he arose and delivered Colonel Hardy's invitation to the "surprise party," but Shanks shook his head and grew suddenly absorbed in a newspaper.

"You've lived here a long time?"

"Yep, quite a spell," came the answer from behind the sheet.

"Isn't it rather lonesome?" The

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young man trembled at this question calculated to answer his own misgivings.

“We’ve never noticed it, I cahilate.”

The voice was inclined to be sharp, but a glow ran through Philip’s heart—she was there!

He resumed the chair, then grew gallant and rather loud.

“Of course, with such a companion, one would never care to see anybody else!”

Shanks lowered the paper and knitted his white brows half diviningly.

“Just you two?” persisted Philip, wishing to divert the searching eyes.

“Yep—jist me an’ my—my private sec’etary.”

Something less than color swept the aged face and his gaze kindled with the kindest light of the day. Shanks was evidently pleased with this new desig-

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nation of the Incomparable, and as for himself, Philip preferred it to that of "grandmother."

With half a smile he added: "'Scuse me, Dan'l, I'll interduce you."

Then he laid bare every nerve in Philip's body; there was an impulse to redress the affront—Shanks irreverently whistled for his private secretary.

A rasping spring behind him announced the opening screen door; his heart leaped—at last he was to meet the dearest mortal in the world; he arose with burning cheek and turned—but only to clutch the post and gasp, and greet a shambling, liver-dotted hound with frigid snout and ears like palm-leaf fans. The animal rapped for order, his air bespeaking apology for having detained the conference; the rusty cat weighing such professions of amity with fine care, then resuming her task

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with arched back and stiffness of tread.

Shanks commanded: "Button, shake hands with yer Congressman."

The old dog slanted his head, turned a protesting eye toward Philip, and wearily lifted the left paw in performance of his solitary trick.

"He's very bright—you should be proud of him," he managed to observe.

Shanks leaned forward and peered into the pale face before him, and then, as if satisfied with the result of the investigation, turned and rocked vigorously.

As Philip arose, the "Hero of Vicksburg" looked far away and slowly said:

"I druv her off, Dan'l—she won't come back no more—never!"

"Won't you tell me something more—just a word?"

Shanks shook his head. "I can't,

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Dan'l.—An' 'bout my claim—let it go till yer term begins.”

He went inside and closed the door.

Colonel Hardy had lived at the American House ever since a death long before, and this night his rooms were thrown together, and the table graced with old linen, china, and silver unpacked for the first time since they were put away. There was haircloth furniture which had loomed into all-pervading prominence since the “antique” habit had sent Happyville in penitent haste to its scrap-piles, a rose-wood melodeon with curved legs, a panel mirror trimmed in time-deepened gold with sleeping lions on it, and a banjo clock upon whose pendulum box a gentleman in knickerbockers, powdered wig, long coat, ruffles, buckles, staff, and three-cornered hat

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handed a flower to an adorable yellow satin miss in great snowy bonnet. The case was puttied and bandaged, its bulging crystal seeming to lean forward to listen, and with defiant eagle on top, it was priceless.

What is more the soul of time than the decrepit veteran that has kept it?

The great city supplied the feast; seasons met in the *menu* and there was excitement when the strawberry stepped upon the lobster's tail.

Long after midnight the party ended, but the host insisted that Philip stay. He pressed a button when they were alone, saying: "I want a little more to wash something off the tip of my tongue—something that's been hanging there a long time.

"My boy, it's often seemed as if in the rush of things, the Almighty has made mistakes in saying who should

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live and who should die—who should have children and who should not. There are countless lonely men and women in this world—and few who haven't some make-believe offspring; old hearts play with the strangest dolls that ever were. They may go near young folks and through their hands hold on to life, or they may just watch over them from afar.

“I've said a thousand times, as some smiling, shiny-faced youngster has hopped along the street: ‘He's like mine would have been—only the hair would have been like this or the eyes like that.’ I always wanted a boy and a girl—and do you know where I found the boy?—the strangest place in the world—upon a bridge. He walked right into my life, without ringing the door-bell, and wanted five hundred dollars to buy stock in a circus. Philip,

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you will never know the happiness it gave me to sign that note. After I had walked away with blood coursing through parts of my body long a desert, I turned to watch you; I wished the amount had been ten times as much—and I adopted you on the spot.

“But the girl was first—she was placed in my arms, so to speak.”

He filled two glasses and resumed: “And how glorious it may all be now in my old days—I’ve a toast just for you and me, though I wanted to drink it before the crowd—‘You love her; may she love you—and may I live to see it!’”

A light which did not come from the green lamp-shade mantled the face of the tall young man who arose to run a hand through his hair and walk the length of the room.

“Colonel, I’ve had nothing but

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riddles all day—tell me something real!”

“Why, Philip, you’ve seen her since I—in fact, I never saw her face at all—it isn’t exactly necessary, you know, for all the children of these adoptions really to exist—some of them play in the sand when they are little—and others—just in the air.”

It was difficult to read the speaker’s face for clouds of smoke, yet his expression was far from levity as his heart was far from evil.

Philip slowly returned from the end of the room.

“Tell me her name.”

“Assuming that she exists, I never knew it.”

“She has never written to you?”

“She does not know that I am in the world.”

Philip lighted a cigar and leaned

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against the mantel; the color left his face, and, for the first time, he addressed his benefactor in a tone of impatience.

“Colonel, you’ve been drinking; you’ve played with a matter which is more to me than all the honors in the world; it’s getting late—I must go.”

“Be patient! I’ve had a fine time to-night; it’s been new life, and under the spell I’ve told you more than I should—and less too.

“Philip!” He shouted the name as if that most alert soul were asleep. “You said I’d been drinking—do you recall the play we saw last Christmas?”

“Yes, Colonel; it was ‘Garrick.’”

“Well, he played drunk to disgust the girl who loved him; I’ve played it to see if you really cared for her—and now I know.”

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Swiftly drawing up a chair till his knees touched those of his friend, Philip anxiously asked: "Is she related to Shanks?"

"God help us, man!" exploded the Colonel. "You've seen them both—isn't it miracle enough for such different people to come into the same world?"

"Yes," the youth replied, dejectedly, "I suppose it is.

"Colonel, doesn't death end all differences?"

"Of course."

"And isn't insanity worse than death?"

"He's not insane!"

"When have you talked to him?"

"Not lately—not in more than forty years. Understand—it's not a grudge; that's easily cured—a word or a bullet. This is soul-sickness—it's incurable."

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Slowly lowering his head, he soliloquized: "Colonel, you've been drinking; Philip says so and Philip ought to know."

He arose and walked to the mirror. "Yes, Colonel, your hair's on end; I'll brush it; your tie's crooked; I'll straighten it; your eyes are queer—but I can't fix them—and you're the fellow who had his pocket picked at the Hilltown convention—well, here's to you, just the same—I knew you a long time ago."

The Colonel raised the glass to his reflection. Without turning, he added: "You're a prince, Philip, for rising to that toast."

With hands behind him the old fighter crossed and recrossed the floor.

"Philip, I've taken too much—not because it's intoxicating, but because it's memory water. When I take a

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little, old orchards bloom again and I'm a child, walking beside the fairest soul that ever flowered in womanhood—and that's sublime. I take some more and up springs a comradeship with a neighbor boy; we hunt; we fish; we trap; we sleep together—and that's fine. I take a little more and we finish the old log school—that neighbor boy and I; we sit on the rail fence—I can see it all—it's May; we tie up our books; we untie the future—that's where our lines cross—we both want to go to West Point; then that neighbor boy gives way for me—and that's the dearest memory possible.

“I should stop with the recollection of that sacrifice; I should drink no more, but I do—and it's too late; all the power on earth will not keep it down; up it comes—that terrible thing—his nameless crime—up from church-

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yard graves rise those innocents—Oh, Philip, that act was patented in hell!”

The Colonel sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands. It seemed an hour he sat in silence, then slowly resumed:

“And you think he’s crazy; you should have known him in childhood; his mind ran away with the teachers. You will soon see men in the Capitol of your country—great men from all nations.

“Some night at a president’s reception, look them over and remember I said this man named Shanks was the brightest of the bright, and but for that one thing might have been a great figure—but come; let’s finish this.”

Emptying the bottle, he leaned forward, his elbow on the arm of the chair; then he whirled the wine between his thumb and finger and spoke

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with deep affection. "She's a great woman, Philip—beautiful clear through—the beauty that age will love too much to mar—she's almost fine enough to be repentance for the old man's crime."

The Colonel's black eyes were fixed on Philip as the eyes of one who speaks because he must—but speaks only once. They turned to linger on the wine-glass and grew dreamy. "Look at this rim closely; do you see anything on it—anybody—any of your old acquaintances?—look at the glass, Philip, not at me."

"No, Colonel; nobody—nothing at all."

"That's strange." His was the most perplexed expression.

"It's only a few inches round and thin as a wafer—not a comfortable place to sit." He held the goblet to

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the light. "There they are and all changing color; now they're pink—now they're purple; must be a million altogether and all your friends—a million fairies pleading with me to tell you everything, but away down in my heart that terrible thing commands me to be silent."

CHAPTER VI

SEVEN months had gone since the Colonel's banquet; election-day brought victory and passed away; Philip had known the ills of office, as Congress had been called in special session soon after his term began. One day during the campaign, he had drawn up at the Pisgah toll-house, but the "single-handed conqueror of Vicksburg" stopped smoking only long enough to request to be excused. As for the identity and whereabouts of the Incomparable, a word from Colonel Hardy, enjoining patience, had reduced Philip to helplessness in the toils of conjecture. Now Congress was adjourned and Shanks had commanded his presence, fixing the hour with that

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precision only natural in one so intolerant of military delay.

He was stationed upon the porch as usual, the only change in the scene being the absence of the rusty cat—due to her encounter with a mink. In the shade of a morning-glory vine Button seasoned his philosophy with a flatness which was balm to the soul, responding to Philip's greeting by opening an eye the hundredth part of an inch and faintly rapping once.

Shanks had become his representative's most faithful correspondent; he had attended legislation with an accuracy which proved him a faithful reader of the *Congressional Record*.

The old man arose, smiling.

He had spoken but a line when the young man wondered what had wrought the change. The nervous vigilance was gone; in its stead was

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the stirring of solicitude to touch Life's warm hand, such as rises from consciousness of loss, long and irreparable.

Philip had sent him a picture of the House of Representatives, showing members in their seats, and, with an enthusiasm which lost itself in pathos, Shanks explained that by looking at this while reading the *Record*, it was easy to see the whole proceeding. He inquired respecting the personalities of leaders, discussed various measures, and grew indignant that any one should have proposed to abandon the White House for a more imposing establishment.

“Ain't things a-changin' all too fast? Why can't they let it alone, a-standin' out anchored to ole days like? I reckon it's jist as I seen it onct, but——”

He stopped abruptly and searched the corduroy coat for his pipe.

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“As I recollect’, you ain’t ejicated up to mullen yit. Tell me ’bout that White House, Dan’l.”

His eyes brightened at the description of the interior, especially the Washington portrait which Dolly Madison cut out and saved from the flames.

He dissented from a suggestion that he attend the next inauguration. “I’d give a heap to see the place ag’in, but then I wouldn’t luk at it fer the whole world—jist a ole man’s idy, you see.

“’Pears like rain off yander.” He pointed to ragged gray clouds drifting in from the south. “Corn’s a-astin’ fer it, too.”

He squared round in his chair. “Dan’l, they’s jist one fear I’ve got. You started so airy an’ wuz so lucky like—I’m sup’stitious ’nough to cahilate they’s jist so many rocks fer every

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feller an' he may git 'em one at a time er all at onct."

To speak of his "claim" was unthinkable, but Philip was speculating as to the effect of such a reference when Shanks introduced the matter himself.

"Guv'ment's wunerful; never asts fer money an' allus has it—an' so you wrote me 'at my claim wuz still appendin'. Dan'l, when you done that, you said to yerself: 'It's the staff Shanks walks with an' I won't take it away.'"

There is no pearl like humor in an old man's eye.

"Do you know what happened when that letter come? I laughed—it wuz turrible, too—like the cryin' out of a feller inside—you see, Dan'l, I'd fergot how."

For an instant, the expression of the year before returned.

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“I wuz a ha’nted house; I dunno; I cahilate the change come ’long with the books you sent—an’ the pit’chur—I got to thinkin’ o’ other things,—that’s all they is to mind-medicine. Well, the night after I laughed I wuz afeerd to go to bed—afeerd I’d wake up wild ag’in—an’ I set up late an’ it wuz cold—way under zero; winders all silver-like, an’ white round the latch; things all a-crackin’ an’ the wind a-gallop’in’ through the trees with a million devils after it—an’ sumpin’ up an’ sed sharp-like: ‘Look out, Shanks, yer laugh’s a-goin’ ’way—there, it’s gone!’

“Dan’l, wuz you ever hit in the eye an’ afeerd to take yer hand off?—well, that ain’t nuthin’ at all. I gethered up my grit an’ tuk a long breath, an’ sez I: ‘I’ll make her loud er not at all,’ an’ then I leapt up, fer the chimbley laughed back—an’ the clock an’ the

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punkins on the beams, an' I piled on more fire an' pulled my cheer up closter an' made Button git up an' talk to me—an' I went to sleep a-settin' there. Next mornin' I thanked the Lord—fer, Dan'l, they's jist two kinds o' people in the world—them that kin laugh—an' them that's crazy."

Leaning far back, he proceeded to whistle different parts of nothing at all, and finally asked: "Heap o' folks a-comin' down to Washin'ton, I cahilate?"

"Nobody but Colonel Hardy and—" Philip restrained himself too late; he had mentioned the forbidden name.

"Yer lucky to have sich a frien', Dan'l; finest feller I ever met." There was no more agitation in his tone than an instant later when a bee in the morning-glory vine brought Button to

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his feet, to turn his head, wrinkle his nose, and snap at flies.

Philip informed him that the records of the War Department told of a "Joseph Shanks." "Grant mentioned him for gallant conduct—he was killed."

The old man's eye gleamed; it was as if some far-off storm of life flashed back its lightning.

"You don't tell me!" he exclaimed after a moment. "Joseph Shanks." He slowly repeated the name. "Sounds familiar-like, might 'a' bin o' kin—Shankses wuz a big fambly."

His manner brightened suddenly: "Luk at that feller." He pointed to a caterpillar pushing his fuzzy length across the floor. "Dan'l, he's got to wear his furs in hot weather er not at all; I don't know whur he's bound fer, but I cahilate it 'll 'mount to 'bout as

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much in a hunderd years as the President's trip to Californie."

The pale face was now traced with the rarest of smiles, the gray smile which comes when, after long years, the lamp of mirth burns low on its altar. It is a strange lamp; the last drop of its oil may be as brilliant as the first, and when so, the death-bed has the cradle's smile.

"Git out o' my way, Shanks; yer on'y a-settin' out hyere a-gassin' to Dan'l an' I'm busy; I'm on my way to be a butterfly an' I ain't got no time to spare!"

He moved his chair. "Come ahead, Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte; I wouldn't hurt you fer the whole blame plantation—go 'long, Button, can't you let a gentleman alone?"

And he who moved aside for caterpillars had done a thing so terrible, its

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memory “lifted innocents from church-yard graves—a thing patented in hell!” Philip gazed at his strange constituent in amazement.

Shanks leaned forward with a start: “I hope that ain’t so!”

“What?”

“Thought I heerd a katydid!”

“What of it?”

“Lordy, Dan’l, a Congressman that don’t know what a katydid stands fer—why, on’y six weeks till frost—listen—no’p, it’s sumpin’ else.”

It grew suddenly dark; large drops of rain tapped up puffs in the road; a gust blew over them; Button jumped, nosing his way inside, and they followed. The room had an atmosphere of order, with its muslin curtains, and broom in the corner. Beneath the clock-shelf stretched a cobweb, a drapery to order, by the

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king of artists now ascending a shaft of speckled light in his private elevator. The cord bed with high posts was piled with straw tick, and over it was a red-and-white quilt, while in the centre of the wall, darkened by a shutter blown against the window, stood the cave-like hood of the fireplace.

Raising the latch, Shanks stepped to the shed, lowered a bucket, and returned with a gourd. "Dan'l, have a drink."

With hands flat on the arms of the chair, the old man leaned back and closed his eyes; he might have been lifeless, but for the lump rising and falling in his throat.

Thunder rolled; countless imps danced upon the shingles; water swept from the eaves in sheets; then it ceased suddenly as it had begun; sunlight flashed;

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the poorest twig dropped diamond after diamond till there was a coronet for every blade of grass; a spice floated out of the dead leaves and moss-covered, crumbling logs; the air was faint-hued; it was like sitting in a bubble.

“It’s a little dark,” Shanks observed, pushing back the shutter and letting the lively light fall upon the fireplace.

Philip’s eyes turned to stars as he sprang to a picture by the chimney. It was of Shanks and a girl, just entering her teens; she was dressed in gingham, her hair parted plainly. At first, Philip thought its gold too bright—but that was only natural, it was the resemblance of the bud to the flower.

He turned as the old man entered the room with a sack.

“Fine picture—of you, Mr. Shanks.”

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The latter poured water into the pot hanging from the crane, then lighted the fire.

“Oh, tol’able, I cahilate; it’s me an’ ‘Mad’—Madeline—it wuz tuk the day she first cleared out; ast her what she’d have; she’s got the other ’n. It’s good o’ her too, on’y it don’t do her fair. An’, Lordy, Dan’l, you’d ought to see her now!”

Rubbing his spectacles, he drew near the likeness, and moistened his lips.

“I druv her off, Dan’l; ye’p, I druv her off; it tuk the hide, but I done it; you kin see jist a little o’ how she felt in that left eye, but I cahilate they wouldn’t ’a’ bin even that to tell on her if she hadn’t a-ried to smile—she’s got the nerve o’ Andy Jackson—the *women* are the brave folks, Dan’l—wait, I’ll fetch it to the light. That other ’n t’other side o’ chimbley’s her mother; she

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wuz my girl, Mary. Let's see, it's bin eighteen year o' Thanksgivin' since she pined away. Bill didn't come back—her man, you know—went West to stake a claim—never heerd tell uv—good feller, Bill King wuz—Injuns, I cahilate.

“Notice little Mad's fore'd; I recollec' onct she shuk her fist at a stick o' wood 'at fell on her bare foot—an' how that straight nose o' hern did quiver—an' luk at that mouth, Dan'l, gentle as a 'johnny-jump-up' an' yit they ain't no poutin' round 'em lips, no whinin', no beatin' round the bush. She wuz a-comin' three when we wuz left to foot it alone; it wuz turrible in a way, an' ag'in it wuz grand an' holy-like—the 'sponsibility—why, Dan'l, when I'd press that little thing ag'in' my heart I'd feel like the sky.

“She wuz allus a-tearin' round, busier'n a robin after a rain—an' climb

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trees—Lordy! Dan'l, that chile wuz part squirrel. She'd set up there in the blossoms a-lukin' like their older sister, till I'd climb up an' git her, an' then uv a summer's night, she'd set in that ole chimbley an' luk at the stars an' play 'heaven' an' talk to the whole universe, an' make me crawl in when my ole rheumatiz would crack, I tell you. She come as a Christmas present, Dan'l, an' one day she up an' sez she wuz goin' to git married that day.

"They wuzn't no bear story ever made 'at I haven't tole her a thousan' times, an' I cahilate I made a thousan' o' my own—an' do you think she'd leave me?—No, siree—not fer the whole creation!"

He wiped the picture with a handkerchief, and gazed at it in silence.

"Why, then—why did you drive her off?" For the moment, Shanks's eyes wandered down the shadow-tangled

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pathway of the years. Then he arose and slowly stirred meal into the bubbling pot.

“It wuz like this, Dan’l. I tuk her to singin’ school at Bethel onct, an’ she set there, eyes an’ ears a-starvin’ like—think she’d go to sleep?—She didn’t bat a eye—an’ she wuzn’t five. That night I wuz a-carryin’ her up the hill yander, all done up in a shawl, wind a-blowin’ hard, an’ I thought she wuz a-dreamin’, when her head popped out like a redbird’s, an’ sez she: ‘Pap, throw me in a snow-drif’ an’ fin’ me.’ ‘Nop,’ sez I; ‘too cole.’ ‘Jist onct,’ sez she, ‘an’ I’ll tell you sumpin’.’ I tossed her in an’ sez she, a-clappin’ her hands: ‘I’m goin’ to be a gran’ singer when I git big’—an’ she kep’ her word, Dan’l—she allus has.

“Well, she went to school, a-singin’ all the time, an’ she made me saw

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away on that ole 'fid' till I wuz most dizzy. Teacher cahilated she wuz fine; why, Dan'l, it wuz jist like she couldn't help it—hyere 'bout this ranch, the birds all 'peared to wait fer her to tune up.

“Well, one day a carriage druv out frum town—the woman o' that surveyin' feller 'at put the railroad through Happyville; it wuz hot, an' little Mad went out to take the toll, an' the woman talked to her an' ast fer a drink, an' the chile fetched that very gourd, an' as the woman wuz a-drinkin', little Mad flew out o' sight a-cryin': 'Wait a minute, lady,' an' when she come back she had a armful o' golden-rod. The woman ust to come an' fetch her things, an' fin'ly one day when Mad had come twelve, she wuz a-ironin' an' a-singin' 'Home, Sweet Home' 'cause it wuz my fav'rite, an' I wuz a-smokin' out on the porch, when a rig druv up

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an' the woman ruz her hand fer me to keep still, an' when the song wuz over she come in an' patted Mad, but she jist smiled an' licked her finger an' spat 'nuther iron on the bottom an' went on with business. Then the woman tuk me off an' sez the chile wuz wunerful, an' when she'd got done a-pleadin', I'd promised to let her take Mad to ejicate. I'd felt fer a long time she wuz too glorious-like to be locked up with a ole man in sich a place—an' I tole the woman to keep her till I sent—an' I never sent.

“But what do you cahilate, Dan'l—it had bin six year, an' one day I wuz a-settin' out on the porch, half asleep, when I heerd wheels a-crossin' Pigeon Crick, an' then they wuz a cloud o' dust; it wuz a hack a-comin' like the wind—a hack, Dan'l, plumb out from town, an' 'fore it stopped, the door

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bust open an' Mad leapt out an' flew on me, a-spillin' fire an' mullen all over both uv us, an' she laughed an' cried, an' said: 'Pap, I've come to stay ferever!'—an' my God, Dan'l—she wuz—she wuz beautifuller'n all the stars!

“She kep' a-jumpin' round like a chile, an' called Button an' tuk me 'long, an' looked down the well an' up the chimbley an' out in the orchard an' everywhur—an' she kep' a-hummin' sumpin' a-gittin' supper, an' I jist stood roun' a-feelin' hot an' cole.

“Then wuz the hardest work I ever had to do; I couldn't let her stay, an' I wouldn't go 'long; she tole me how we'd keep house in the great city. Sez she: 'Uv a Sunday afternoon I'll take you by the arm, a-smokin' yer corn-cob pipe, an' me an' you an' Button 'll go walkin' in the park—the idy, Dan'l—

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I druv her off ag'in—an' that wuz—let's see."

He turned and opened the door to the shed; it was half covered with chalk marks.

"That wuz Aprile a year ago."

Philip's mind flew back to a day when there had been a fire—a day when a glorious creature had stood in the Red Front book-store, and smiled in token of a kinship with all mornings from the first.

Then his heart leaped at the sight of two other entries below:

"Mad'lin—August 10,

"Dan'l—August 11."

The first was the date of his nomination; the second, his first visit to Pisgah.

"She went back," Shanks resumed; "said she wuz a-goin' to start a school an' make her board an' keep—an' now

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hole yer breath—she paid the mortgage on this plantation, an' now it's ourn—all uv it—two acres an' a half!

“I’ve a letter hyere; yer eyes is younger’n mine; I’ll jist give you the last page—the rest’s on’y foolishness—read it out loud, Dan’l.”

“This is a city of wonders, but give me Pisgah every time.

“I’m glad Mr. Daniel sent you all those things, and that you enjoy them. To think of the convention—your speech and the home-coming—it makes me homesick, so don’t be surprised if you see me coming up the hill one of these fine days.”

As Philip returned the letter, Shanks arose in a trembling transformation, the veins round his temples seeming to lie almost upon the skin.

“Dan’l, I liked you a turrible lot, but sumpin’ jist tole me you’d try to

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take her frum me—an' I'm goin' to keep her!" He shook a withered fist in Philip's face. "I seen you when you found that pit'chur by the chimbley, an' ag'in when you seen them names writ on that door, an' to prove it, I give you the page a-speakin' o' yerself, an' I seen you take that card frum yer pocket an' compare the writin'.

"I writ them names but I kin rub 'em out!"

With a cold, cracking laugh, he sprang to the door and rubbed the chalk marks with his sleeve, then he slammed it, and creeping back, placed both hands upon Philip's shoulders as he had done that rainy night when he rode to Happyville with the "retirement."

"Dan'l, luk me in the eye!" He blinked as before a sudden light, then shook his head. "No'p; I bin wrong;

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you don't luk like that boy I ust to know
—you don't luk like none o' my blood at
all—an' don't come ag'in—never!”

Philip stepped toward the door. “I
owe you a great deal, Mr. Shanks, I'll
do anything in the world—but ‘never’
is a long day.”

“Go—Dan'l: leave me alone.”

He dropped his shaking hands, and
the old dog arose to lick his fingers.

CHAPTER VII

IT was Decoration Day, and Happyville fluttered with flags; school-books were abandoned, and children gathered here and there, some playing marbles, others wandering toward the river with pole and line. The "Old Soldier" with lighter step and brighter badge came down the street and disappeared up a stairway where fife and drum were heard. Women stood in bushes, clipping roses and snowballs, and down the way loomed the secret society man in full regalia, leading his little girl, and causing other little girls to clasp the pickets, gaze in awe, and lament the absence of like parental plumage.

Flowers were strewn about the Soldiers' Monument, and the last sounds

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of hammer and saw came from City Park, where new benches told of outdoor exercises.

“No hope of rain,” Philip mused as he walked along; he looked again into the cloudless blue—the ardent sun—and thought of the fifteen miles to Saddletown. It was a long trip to make alone; he entered the American House for a companion.

Colonel Hardy, arrayed in white flannel, was reading the paper.

“I’d take you along if it would not soil you.”

“You forget, Philip—I’m ‘Marshal of the Day.’” The Colonel smilingly waved a hand toward his red sash. “In your remarks this afternoon—don’t ‘reunite the sections.’”

Two highways stretched away to Saddletown, one along the river under

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sycamores, while the other pointed straight out through the heat.

There was no room for debate, and the old horse had chosen the trees when Philip turned him down the torrid prospect. The animal's displeasure was apparent in instant weariness which brought moral suasion from the driver, then the whip; but neither availed, since the animal's hearing was defective when he willed, while that portion of his body exposed to attack had long been immune. Mile after mile his vexation increased till, at the foot of a high hill, he stopped with the authority of a clock run down, and turned an accusing head toward the buggy, a protest which Philip was in no mood to heed as a summer dress flitted across a porch ahead of him.

Leaning over the side, he lightly touched Comrade's flank: "Go on—it's only a little way to Fate."

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Then he crossed the balmy boundary of a song, and an old gentleman came forth, dragging a chair, a fiddle under his arm. In the act of sitting, he turned, shaded his eyes, and fled within.

As the buggy drew opposite, the door banged with a violence which sent Button through the morning-glory vine. Philip tied the horse, looking for signs of life about the shack, now wrapped in all the stillness of a fort just before assault. With a smile, he stroked the horse's nose: "Comrade, behold me in the flesh—perhaps for the last time."

He crossed the porch and Button crept near enough to pay a tribute of amazement to his daring. He knocked, but there was no answer, then raised the latch, when something chained him to the threshold.

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It was not the forbidding hand of Shanks nor his pale face; it was a miracle like December turned to June, and the presence of the one who had wrought it, sitting upon a trunk in the centre of the room. He had seen the place less than a month before; it had been gray and desolate; now a radiant mist laced it with glory. The air was strewing apple-blossoms in the path of summer; now it drifted in to billow the curtains and lift the hair which wove a splendor round a wondering face.

Philip thought it glowed with something more than confusion—a protest. Was it directed at his entrance or the withered hand, still aimed in warning?

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Shanks.” He had bowed and half withdrawn when the hand lowered into a greeting, barely civil.

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He did not misconstrue the courtesy; it implied only the reluctance of one of a vanishing type of men to close his door against a fellow being.

“I realize it all; I’ve forced you to yield your hand; I shall bother you no more.”

The Incomparable arose—slender, taller, lovelier, the roses in her white dress mounting to her cheeks. A glance of remonstrance which her grandfather did not see and she crossed the room, extending her hand to Philip. “Your success has made us happy—and we wish to thank you.”

He gazed as upon a dream come true, till she withdrew her hand.

“Demosthenes should not have come this way, Miss King,” he began with hesitation. “He did not know that you were here—though the morning seemed a little brighter. Your grand-

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father has told him how he loves you—not with words—for he belongs to that class which speaks most by what it does not say. He recalled the tenderest sacrifice—recalled it as lightly as some recall their obligations—he hurried over it as essential in the telling of a tale.

“This house has been very kind to this Demosthenes; your grandfather saved his political life once upon a time, and this Demosthenes now wishes him health, long life—and your companionship.”

Shanks placed a hand upon Philip’s shoulder, knitted his brows, and left the room.

“And Miss King did him a great favor—she did not know his name; he was drifting in an idle current; she lifted him out of it; she turned his face toward the East; she made him a man—such as he is—she gave him ambi-

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tion—she had it to spare—and then she gave him something more—there are some who think it more than all else on earth—and it would have lasted had he never known her.

“When he saw her a little while ago, he thought to ask her to go to Saddle-town. If she would be so kind, he said to himself, she would not have to listen—but, no—the day is hot, the road is dusty, and the place is small—a pump, a shop, and a handful of folks—it is enough for Demosthenes to know that this Miss King really lives outside the land of dreams—and he must go.”

“Wait!” commanded Shanks from the shed. Then he flung the old door open and pointing to fresh chalk marks, cried: “See, Dan’l—I rubbed it out—but I’ve put it back!”

Madeline turned, her bewilderment complete.

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“My chile, Dan’l put me on a mountain-top, but my place is at the bottom—I wuz foolish like a young feller ’bout his girl—an’ now I want you to do me a favor—git on yer things an’ go ’long to Saddletown!”

They had gone slowly for a time when Philip explained that haste was dusty. The Incomparable’s sceptical glance was followed by her grasping the conversation.

“I’m homesick for the city already; I wish ‘Pap’ would go back with me.”

Turning to survey the devastation wrought by this remark, something in Philip’s face caused her to look away.

“You like that life?”

“Ah, yes; it is happiness; it’s the market where the world brings its best—it’s the universe!”

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The decisive tap she gave the buggy stay was more than speech, and Philip surveyed her hand, marvelling that anything so delicate could deal a blow so deadly.

“The dirt is flying all over you!” He tucked the lap-robe round her. “And hadn’t I better put up the rain-curtain?”

“No—no!” She returned the robe with a kindliness which reminded him of the morning-glory vine. “It doesn’t hurt anyhow!” She pointed to the linen coat which shielded her from throat to toe. The sailor was tilted forward to protect her eyes, and a wondrous girlishness lingered in its blue band. Still he thought its shade defective as he glanced into her eyes.

The desire to bestow some homage proved irresistible, and as he tied a flaming bandanna round her neck, a

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strand brushed his cheek; he was as a weary pilgrim anointed by spray from a consecrated fountain—and Comrade wandered into a fence corner to nip the tallest grass.

“What is the hour of the meeting?” She lifted her head with smiling concern. “You had better let me drive.”

He yielded the lines with infinite security—she did not know the magic spot on Comrade’s flank.

He was drifting toward the fairest of shores when his bark encountered as cruel a reef as ever wrecked a tender meditation.

“Of course you like Happyville and will always stay; you have been very fortunate; you can have a great career—become a leader—reach your goal—that’s worth while.”

How worthless it all seemed; the

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shouts of partisans returned to taunt him, and out of the home-coming issued a mighty rocket stick—dead—burnt out.

When the hope of the first lover died and he was led to the petrified forest of Fame and offered a glorious monument—that hapless day, Irony was born.

“Please don’t speak of my success. It’s nothing, though I never knew it till now. Political victory proves no quality—it is only something which happens; there is sparse merit in political ambition. It is more a fever than anything else. Command the average man to paint an ‘Ascension,’ render ‘Faust,’ write another ‘Lear,’ or wake the perfect ‘Venus’ which sleeps in every rock—he will tap his forehead and pass you by; but let the village jester observe in him a con-

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stable—President—anything—he flings his homespun off, and between dawn and dusk looks like Cromwell, walks like Richelieu, and retires a fatalist to dream of listening senates.”

As she contemplated his despair he was tempted to tell of Old Settlers’ Day, the challenge of the twins—his victory over such overwhelming odds—his vision of the phantom train, but a strange helplessness sealed his lips. She touched his arm in protest. “Please don’t speak like that—you said I was partly responsible.”

“You have your life all mapped out?”

“Yes; I want to make my own money, then go abroad and finish. Oh, look!” she cried with rapture. “Black-eyed susans—a world of them—I’m going to get some.”

He instantly leaped from the buggy.

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"I didn't see that barb-wire," she called apologetically.

"It's nothing at all."

"That's enough!" she insisted as he continued gathering an armful.

The return was less dexterous; he became fastened everywhere.

"That man coming will surely kill his horse!" She pointed down the road. Claspings the black-eyed susans, the crimson statesman in the fence glanced upward as the horseman flourished upon the scene. "You're late, Daniel—quartet's sung all it knows—local speakers all talked out—people getting tired—I'll go back and hold them!" And he whirled away.

Philip regained his freedom at the price of a hole in his coat, but thanked Heaven for it when the Incomparable said: "I'll mend it—I used to know how." Then she added a line which

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made a rent more difficult to mend:
“Then you’ll have something to remember me by.”

With reproach heaped upon dejection he urged Comrade to surprising speed.

The people waited and were rewarded. At first, Philip was “in the brush,” as one old gentleman whispered, but in a little while he calmed, and as if the start had been only for the sake of contrast, gradually ascended in excellence till he stood upon the plane of the inspirational orator. Opponents who once spoke of his “flowery nothings” now praised his depth of understanding, and old admirers were borne beyond discretion’s bounds. That speech placed his feet in the road to higher things, and to this day old men sit round the tavern fire at Saddletown and compare it with triumphs of the early times.

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On the return Comrade was turned this way and that to avoid young drivers, eager to display their horses in action. Philip knew he had succeeded, as every speaker has known, be the comment good or bad. He now had the orator's credentials; he could think upon his feet; he would never memorize again.

For several seconds his thoughts actually left the fair one beside him. They talked but little; they were nearing an enchanted land where intuitions bud and speech is not.

Near the toll-house she held up a bursted glove: "That's for applause, Demosthenes!" Had he analyzed her face he would have seen that she did not consider the loss irreparable, but instead of devoting himself to frivolities of thought, he met the crisis as a statesman should, slowly stripped the

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glove from her hand and placed it in his pocket.

Then he added with tremendous seriousness: "About mending the coat—I may not be able to be here by nine o'clock in the morning—it may be a whole minute after."

He placed her at the door, then walked over to the dog.

"Button, shake hands with your Congressman."

Shanks smiled. "He's my pupil, you know," boasted the Incomparable, smoothing the crumpled ears.

The old man followed Philip to the buggy. "She don't care fer what I say, Dan'l—she won't clear out no more—she's come to stay—as long as I do."

Philip restrained that speed which Comrade always developed when homeward bound; all the flying orchard petals fell in the road before him, but

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when at last Happyville soared into view, it disturbed him. He had found the Incomparable—he had forgotten to leave this matter in the Colonel's charge. But the fear which tormented most was lest his benefactor should resent the rising intimacy with Shanks. He would go straight to the American House.

"You had a great meeting!" exclaimed the marshal of the day; "I read success all about you—but tell me—was she pleased?—and has my ancient station—master of the heart of Daniel—been abolished?"

"Who in the world told you?"

"The A, B, C's of human nature—I knew how it would end when you took the Pisgah road instead of the other."

"Why, Colonel, you were in this very room."

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"I didn't have to see you; one of the things taught at West Point was to figure what the other fellow would do—and then I knew you could be trusted—especially after Shanks warned you to stay away. The great beauty about it is—you didn't lose any time—she reached Pisgah less than half an hour before you."

The Colonel's manner was the more exasperating because it was so matter-of-fact.

"When did you see her?"

"Never in my life, Philip, except that day in the runaway."

"Colonel, you are a king of clay—and a prince of the occult! Won't you go to Pisgah some time?"

"No; that's a dead line!"

Hardy smoked in silence for a time, then said: "I've been a little slow—a Cupid shouldn't have the rheumatism

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—but you may realize some day that few things happen too early or too late. I'll help you in politics as long as I live, but in this other field, I'm now at my wits' end; I've got you together; I leave it to you, and as I told you, when you wanted money to buy stock in a circus, it's a fine business—good luck!”

Philip arose to leave, but turned in the doorway.

“There's something else—I mentioned your name to Mr. Shanks the other day, and he said you were the finest man he ever met.”

The warrior cast a regretful glance across the street, then faced Philip with great decision: “About that post-office vacancy at Molly—I believe I'd choose Milo Sloppy; he named his boy after you, and if you appoint somebody else, he'll change

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that name to George Washington—
God only knows what such a blow
might do!”

CHAPTER VIII

SOON after the Incomparable's return Shanks showed symptoms of decline. "If a feller's in bed—he's sick!" Thus he disposed of the doctor's orders, and every day found him on the porch, rocking with a hand on Madeline's chair, or spinning reminiscences for Philip or Michael Halfpap.

In the shade of the morning-glory vine, he could look up and down the road and straight ahead, dream over a scene which rose and fell in great billows, with here and there a glimpse of Pigeon Creek, the top of the covered bridge to the right and the old "Deer Inn" off to the left—half a century or more.

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He gazed over the fields when they were green, and again when they had turned to checker-boards of green and gold, with sunlight and shadow sweeping over them like great birds. He saw the feminine grace of wheat, casting off its snowy cloak to run and play with summer wind, till, more staid, it put on countless russet bonnets which tossed in the breeze like golden laughter.

Before him was the sturdy purpose of the corn, from the time it peeped like rabbits' ears, then stood erect, and as the weeks flew past, drew from its magic, slender stalk, blades of emerald, husks of silver and of lace, rustling up through rain and warmth, drawn by summer sky, whispering strange commands, till finally it flung into the air the tasselled plumes of that grand army which from its autumn knapsack feeds the world.

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Through it all the old gentleman saw such constancy, he asked no more than to be a little part of nature's dignity—to blow away like a season—without pain or regret.

“She talks big, Dan'l, but ain't foolin' me with this speckilatin'—my ticket's bought—carpet-sack's packed—I'm waitin' fer a train goin' in the right direction—but I'm foolin' her, I 'pear to take it all in an' ast fer more—w'y, I've argified a hour, I cahilate, as to how we'd put a wide porch hyere—next summer!” He emphasized another year as if it were a century.

There was a sensation when she decreed that he put on linen; he objected because the suits had no vests. He feigned indignation when she scattered mats over the floor, declaring them “fit neither fer man to walk over or dog to sleep on!” Then the crusade

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reached his bed. Philip took him for a walk while the canopy was being placed over the high-poster, and the old man beheld it with delight and patted the Incomparable's head.

One could not have been deceived in the place, of course, yet, like a short man walking with a taller, it threw back its shoulders to keep pace with the gentlemen in linen.

The room to the south was Madeline's. It used to be filled with rusty implements and old harness; there was a corn-bin in the corner; weatherboarding was missing, and the floor had commenced to fall away from the rest of the establishment, but it was coaxed back. Philip and Michael painted the walls and floor after doing Shanks's apartment in white to match the curtains and canopy. An old blue-and-white coverlet was draped across one

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end of Madeline's establishment, and behind this was the "clothes-room"; and her wicker trunks, piled where the siding threatened to depart without ceremony, became a bureau, and lent a sea-island splendor.

And the old shed—a stove was installed in one end, a dining-table in the other, and a windlass over the well, half-way between. The ends and rear were skeletonized and screened, and vines trained up to ribbon the light, while the diner looked forth upon hollyhocks and sun-flowers.

The hanging gardens of Babylon may have been something like it.

The whole thing should have been taken to an exposition to show what a mere girl—that is, one of a certain kind—can accomplish, for to make Dilapidation smile is greater art than to paint a leaf which will deceive the wind.

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Birds merely nest in heroes' statues; their songs are for those who practise sublimity where nothing is sublime; who find abounding glory in adorning other lives, and who, if there be no flowers, surprise common grass into better beauty still.

The sunlight loved that old shack; the Incomparable had made a home—in dialect.

Button confessed dissent the day she broomed him from repose beneath Shanks's canopy, but soon yielded and followed her up and down and everywhere.

"That bread 's one o' her solos, Dan'l!" the old fellow declared, bowing to the other end of the table, the first day Philip dined with them. "And how do you like your position, my lady?"

"Wouldn't trade it for anything, Pap. You wouldn't believe it, Mr.

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Daniel, but the city is terribly behind Pisgah; it actually treats dogs as Europe once treated great artists—makes them wait for the second table.” She leaned toward Shanks so irresistibly that he turned to his “private secretary”: “Button, you rascal, clear out; don’t you know they’s comp’ny?”

“Does the ‘Cannon Ball’ often whistle fer a stop, Demosthenes?” He chuckled in a manner utterly unpardonable at the table.

“Oh, have some of this—or this—I believe something’s burning!” The Incomparable flew to the kitchen, whence, after great slamming of stove doors, she returned, shaking her head at the offender.

“Do you really believe they will revise the tariff, Mr. Daniel?”

Her anxiety would have done credit to a captain of industry.

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“Stop whur you air!” Shanks commanded, with knife and fork upright upon the table.

“Why, Pap!”

“It’s ag’in’ the constitution—titles o’ nobility—‘Mr. Dan’l’ an’ ‘Miss King’—the idy—an’ in a place o’ on’y two rooms an’ a half—an’ nuthin’ on the floor but hay—either quit it er call me ‘King,’ an’ Button ‘Perfesser!’”

Philip insisted on supplying a thousand things, and made a determined stand for his right to furnish a cook—a suggestion which Madeline promptly vetoed. She was little short of divine that morning, with a patch of flour upon her oven-flushed face, indignant that any one should have questioned her right to do everything for her grandfather.

The effect was not lost upon Michael, who bowed his lowest to observe: “If

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the ancient house of Halfpap could have its way, the papers would soon be filled with a function, which for lilies of the valley would surpass anything ever known in Happyville!"

For the first time the gray and brown eye reached an understanding.

"That being the case," replied the Incomparable, "you may pick enough dandelions for a bouquet—and get fresh water for them—and, Philip, if you've filled the wood-box, go over to Price's for the milk."

Shanks paused in lighting his pipe: "Everybody's got to do sumpin' round this ranch—me an' Button 'll do the mind work."

She was arranging Michael's offering upon the porch table when Philip returned. "They never get a kind word, but go right on forever turning the other cheek and blooming as a sky-

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lark sings.” She stood off to survey the effect, then added a few deft touches and sprinkled their golden faces.

She never left the place, even to go to Happyville, except the day they took Shanks to the circus.

A quiet glory ran through the summer, but the greatest day was when Philip took the old man to see Pigeon Creek in high water. He drove slowly going home, till there was a signal which the latter did not see. His outbreak came a hundred yards from the house: “Stop—good Lord—a pi—an—er!”

A little more and he touched the lines: “Hol’ up a spell, Dan’l!” He listened till the last words died away. “Same weather; same song; sounds the same as the day the woman tuk her off.”

After dinner when Shanks was asleep in his chair Philip led the Incomparable to the orchard.

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He helped her up the stile and stood in admiration, as she swung the wide straw hat by its long red ribbons, just a quiver in her cheek, her eyebrows lifted, till she extended a hand. "Won't you please come along?"

She made a sweeping gesture:

"I take possession of this majestic region—two acres and a half—in the name of my august sovereign—Milton Shanks!"

She plucked a beech leaf. "Permit me, sir, to confer this badge of office—let's see—what's your designation?"

"Gentleman-in-waiting!"

Seated under the trees, they talked of everything but the theme which, let us hope, was in the minds of both. The thread of Philip's discourse, so bravely begun on Decoration Day, lay tangled in his brain. Again and again he resolved to speak—carefully shaped the

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words, but only sat in silence, or uttered some boneless commonplace.

The Old Settlers' picnic—that was ages ago—the phantom train—it was more distant still—and once when a traction engine whistled for the threshers, he thought of the “Cannon Ball” and started with alarm.

There was little occasion to lament the distance between them as she gazed over the tree-tops into the blue wonderland of a perfect summer day, gentle as a universal soul, as through it glided snowy ships whose voyages were to end in rain-drops. The bees were in the elder bloom; butterflies staggered past like blossoms running off; the drowsy air was full of fragrant things that never were; over the meadow, cattle, wedged in the shade, swung their tails in sleepy unison and fair Pisgahland nodded in responsive stu-

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por—till loose bark fell at the orchard's edge and a climbing fox-squirrel drew his bushy plume round and round a buckeye tree, pausing not till, at his high front door, he cast one glance below and plunged within to bid his family banquet on a nut, and doubtless heed romantic version of his escape from two dreamers far beneath.

She looked into his hat and read the inscription aloud:

“The Globe of Happyville and New York!”

Her voice seemed filled with roses, which he promptly persuaded himself had been pressed in a book called “yesterday,” then he thought of a sheaf of red ones in the county atlas at home.

“I wonder what it would be like if I had never gone away?” She tied the long red ribbons into bows.

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“Over life’s bridge two multitudes pass—one of country boys and girls—with eyes on steeples—the other of old people—city-bowed—city-wrinkled—with eyes on fodder shocks. We must leave everything to see it as it is—and everybody. We don’t reach art through nature, but nature through art—by a longing for the lost— But you’re not listening to my fine philosophy, Philip; you’re looking ’way over yonder at that threshing-machine. I’ve often wished I had lived when white flour was a stranger—I know all about it, you see,” she added with a smile as Philip made bold to tender a surprised glance.

She leaned forward to clasp Button’s head.

“Pap and nature are old neighbors—he told me of the trees and vines and berries, the signs of long winter and early spring, the phases of the moon,

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the calls of birds, the ways of beasts; whenever we found a track in the snow he'd tell me what made it, where it was going, and what for. He told me of the herbs that cured the fever; the words that worked charms; the Indian's curious lore—how the youth rode horseback to the forest dance—with some one behind him—both in their homespun, proud as a mountain. And those calls!—on long winter nights, with now and then the screech of an owl; he would fiddle and cry them out as I hopped over the floor, and pretend it was a grand ball.

“Pioneer days—seed corn in the rafters, pumpkins in the loft; shot-gun in the corner; almanac hanging by the clock; weather talking in the chimney, pedlers coming round with wonders in their packs, and news from the far-off world. Education was sparse,

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but character great; manners were simple, but so were hearts; culture was young, but hospitality old; they were strong and impulsive and brave—they were people worth while; the frontier father and mother were making the wilderness polite when kings and queens were making throne-rooms base. Ah, Button, these are poor times!”

Her face grew perplexed. “And the zodiac—that was a mystery—Pap would say: ‘We’ll plant this in the Fish, and that in the Twins.’”

Philip sat upright: “Did *he* put any dependence on those Twins?”

“Oh, they’re infallible for things which grow above ground; but let’s talk of something else—of politics,” she added, noting his blank expression.

“I suppose the greatest part of your success was the home-coming; do you know when you spoke from the court-

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house steps I could have touched you?—and I missed the train. I stayed at the hotel—whatever made landlord Lowden name his rooms after States?”

“Why, it’s the American House.”

“Well, I spent the night in ‘Texas’; it was hardly large enough to turn in. He is a fine humorist—‘Rhode Island’ is the largest of all.”

Philip buckled on his armor. “In the inside pocket of my coat you will find a souvenir of that occasion which is not for sale.”

The glance she gave on drawing forth the card, “For Demosthenes’s mother,” would be unforgettable in the life of a race.

“That was foolish; I was irresponsible that night—like everybody else. I was standing in your yard and started to present those roses and congratulate her like the rest—but I gave them to a

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little girl. "Tell me," she smiled across the sun-streaked orchard turf, "are you still in the fire department?"

"Who knows, Madeline—but for you I might be a chief! The town could have burned that day for all I cared—and I almost missed bidding you good-by!"

"That would have been very terrible—Mr. Philip Daniel!" She shook her head solemnly.

"I walked ten miles that night, then tossed an eternity; I dreamed of the Dead Sea giving up its wasted days; it was dotted with black ships which sailed straight toward me, then glided suddenly off. Their rigging was filled with the white faces of disappointments; broken spars floated everywhere, and now and then a bony hand clutched them from beneath the water—and when I awoke, I resolved to find

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you if it took till Doomsday, and it did—almost.”

“Please, Philip—let’s just go on being improved gypsies.”

“Don’t you think there would be more money in sheep if they were clipped every month?” she digressed as her lonely investment nibbled nearer. “Wool on the back seems such idle capital.”

She began with a tone of thrift, but turned away.

“I feared this—you were so different awhile ago when I gave you that leaf—I wouldn’t hurt you for anything—but I suppose this had to come.”

She leaned against the tree and gazed into the boughs.

“Oh, to drift and drift and never touch a shore—as time does—and the world—that must be what Paradise is. Philip, I’m unhappy—don’t you think he’s failing—very fast?”

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“Yes—every day.”

They silently contemplated a great change—one against which both had closed their eyes till now. From the fall of every house, whether castle by the Rhine or lean-to by the pike, issues that sentiment, without which autumn would be only color-wild. There is aloofness in lonely columns of old temples; they stand in the climate of the stars, clasping Fable's pale flowers; answering speculation with awe—disdainful of what is—Desolation's fine aristocrats. But chimneys in roadside weeds bid one heed Oblivion's folk-lore—hope and fear, faded moons, mirth's dead laughter, pleasure's spectre, loves that are dust, mortals' vapor-ending question—“Whither?”—all drifting in the amber of old afternoons.

“And you will remain, Philip—till it is all over?”

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“I will remain always—if you will let me.”

She turned to the western sky; the old Painter had taken his station in the Venice Hills, wrought a sea of pearl, piled its shores with purple cities, and blown across its bosom the swelling sails of innumerable golden craft.

“And to think, Philip—that grand old fellow has been doing it forever—in jungles—in lands of ice—where none could see—and he, with soul enough to worship such a master, has been called ‘pagan’—and by human specks who ask applause.”

“May I speak of anything I wish?”

“Anything.”

“You were twelve when you went away—did you ever notice anything about your grandfather—anything strange?”

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"It makes it seem alive to have you mention it."

"He told you the Vicksburg story?"

"Many times."

"What caused him to believe it?"

"I only know that long before I was born something happened which has followed him ever since. One day, as far back as I can remember, he took me to Happyville, and as we turned into the public square, there was a soldier's funeral, and he turned and drove away as hard as he could, and didn't go back for a year.

"That night I was awakened by a cry; it was the name 'Joseph'; I listened and heard it again, and looking across the room in the moonlight, I saw him sitting up in bed with arms outstretched. I spoke and he awoke and said: 'My boy came to visit me—but he couldn't stay—don't be fright-

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ened—your grandpap was only dreaming.’

“He half promised to tell me once; it was a summer night when I was little. I had crawled into the fireplace to look up at the stars. I squinted my eye and there was a gleam of light, extending clear to heaven, and I asked: ‘Who put the stars into the flag?’ He dropped his paper and said: ‘What do you know about any flag, child?’ I crept out and took a faded little one out of the Bible; it was of silk—no larger than a handkerchief; it was wrapped round an old letter. He rubbed his spectacles and seemed surprised and said: ‘Why, it is a flag, but it’s like you—it isn’t big enough to count’; then he caught me up and held me tightly and rocked the longest time and said: ‘You want to know who put the stars in the flag—the best men that

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ever lived—and the best women, too—they put them there, and kept them there—now lay it away, and some day it will be yours.’

“As I grew older, strange questions came to me from somewhere, and there seemed to be something about him—at times almost at his side.”

She glanced toward the sunset and her tone was of infinite sadness: “How it has all changed!”

The western glory had withered into endless volcanic wastes, with sightless objects frozen to the jagged limbs of trees long dead—and with ashes sifting down.

She arose slowly.

“That thing by his side was gray—as it is off yonder.

“When the day comes, Philip, for us to leave this dear place, I must go and sit down with Nature,

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all alone; she will me tell everything—everything you and I should know—she will tell it, whether good or bad—for she will be my only kin.”

“And I?”

“Be a leader; I shall always watch you; it was a revelation the day you spoke to the people of Saddletown—you were some one else—you were everybody—and when I could think at all, I said: ‘He can accomplish anything!’”

Her face was flooded with a light such as he had never seen.

“Madeline, I didn’t speak to the people of Saddletown that day—I spoke to one who had never lived in Saddletown at all—no one else was there—I should have seen them.”

As she turned toward him, a little monarch whose reign is as old as time marched into her cheek and

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flung his crimson mantle open; her eyes widened, her lips parted; the earth flew faster, and there were wonders never told by shepherds; deserts tossed with all the roses that ever bloomed and died; the Dead Sea awoke; the waves laughed and tossed golden spray into each other's faces, then they ran, hurrying to shore to sing to the everlasting sands—all in one immortal, tender instant!

The faint notes of a supper-bell came up the hollow.

"Listen, Philip; we must go."

"Feller left a present fer you, Mad," Shanks began, as they appeared.

"Who was he?"

"Don't know; he lukt suspicious-like; it's at yer plate."

In a moment she came out with a little silk flag.

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She framed the old man's face in her hands:

"I've always felt that away down in your heart there was—something glorious—and that some day you would tell me—hold still till I pin this rose on your coat."

"Why, chile—how you talk. Come hyere, Button, they's a burr in yer ear."

CHAPTER IX

MIDNIGHT the following month, Philip flew up the steps to Colonel Hardy's room. "Shanks has had a stroke and wants to see you; something is on his mind; the doctor says he may go like that!" Philip snapped his fingers.

"My young friend, I'd go in spite of vow and everything if it would do any good." Hardy twisted his watch-chain and walked up and down. Then he stepped quickly to the closet, drew forth an old military cloak, pulled a slouch hat over his eyes, and motioning to Philip, passed out of the door.

As they drove through the fog Philip had never known his companion so

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silent; he had but a monosyllable even at mention of his favorite foes.

At last a pale light fell down the hill, and as Philip tied the horse, Hardy stood waiting to be led.

Philip looked through the window and touched the Colonel's arm.

The candle on the clock shelf was like a lily in the gloom, its rays trembling off into gray. Shanks was in his chair, propped with pillows, a white blanket round his shoulders; his face rested in the hand which was free, and as he glanced into the fire they seemed to be fading away together.

He turned to smile as Madeline entered from the shed, and when the long wisp of hair fell from behind his ear, she brushed it back.

As one who goes to sea beholds the rudeness of the shore melt into the image of his regret, so this tired spirit

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saw the medley of old nights and days merge into the sweet face, the lustrous eyes, the fine calmness of the Incomparable as her hand crossed his forehead again and again.

He had heard the horse; he knew it brought one who had been his inseparable companion till young manhood; he was about to lift the sheet from off some mystery, and then, perhaps that friendship would come back from the other end of his life.

But there was no token of speculation; Shanks's expression was more than one of peace after weariness; it was that crumbling, elemental something which, from the beginning of the world, has come into the faces of doubters and believers as their names have been called from out the shadows.

Had his Pilot issued from the fire, the feeble hermit would have risen

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with the greeting: "Which way, friend? —come along, Button."

The Colonel pointed to the dog lying with his head upon his master's feet. "Look, he knows it all."

"Thank you fer comin'," Shanks began as they entered. "Dan'l, take the cheer by the table. I want to tell you sumpin'—an' hurry."

His impatience was such as reckons with a storm.

"Write it as I say it—an', Madeline, put some mullen in my pipe—ain't had none all day."

His lips parted and closed in dry smacks; his face relaxed.

"It's a long tale—an' a long time—over forty year; I lived on the border like an' had a friend by the name o' Hardy—we ust to call him 'Elephant'—an' I had a boy, too—but I'm ahead

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o' my story. This Hardy wuz in the reg'ler army, but he left it 'cause they wuz no fightin' an' come back to run the mill. When war come he fetched the word to my house. It wuz later'n this, I cahilate, the night he tapped at my winder, an' a-leanin' frum his saddle, says: 'Milt, let's raise a regiment.'

“‘Elephant, er Hardy, that is,’ sez I: ‘good-by, I’m ag’in’ the war that’s comin’—I’m fer the South—damn the North an’ them that’s fer it!’

“He leant fur down frum his roan mare, an’ sez he: ‘I don’t like to hyear you say that—even in fun—a-havin’ knowed Lincoln as you ust to—an’ it ain’t no time when Sumter’s fell!’

“‘It ain’t no badgerin’, Elephant,’ sez I—‘but sure enough—I’m as solemn as Abraham a-leadin’ Isaac to the sacrifice—Lincoln—why, he’s on’y a instrument in the devil’s hand!’

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“At that Hardy drawed back an’ galloped off—an’ we ain’t done no talkin’ since.”

He paused a moment.

“Hardy tuk a vow to support his country—I tuk one to destroy it—he fought fer the flag an’ I cursed it.”

For the first time the old men looked each other in the face; into the Colonel’s eyes drifted war-clouds from the far sky of half a century, while Shanks smiled and was white.

“It wuz a great day in ole Millville when Hardy’s Comp’ny marched off. They had dinner at the ‘Brethren’ Church, an’ my woman an’ the rest give a flag they’d made, an’ they wuz speakin’ an’ carr’in’s on. Hardy tuk that flag—I kin hyear him now: ‘When we bring this back,’ sez he, ‘they won’t be no spots on it ’less they’s red ones’—an’ they wuzn’t. Long ’bout sundown

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the fife an' drum struck up an' they formed—chil'run wundrin', women wringin' hands, an' ole vets o' the War o' '12 a-totterin' 'long the line a-wishin' they could go, a-sheddin' hickory tears, an' a-shoutin' out: 'God bless you, boys o' Millville—an' give 'em hell!'

"When my boy Joey wriggled out o' his mother's arms, she leant ag'in' the fence an' they fanned her—Joey wuz a lieutenant, you know—an', my God—he lukt like a soldier!

"I didn't dare face him; I'd left home 'fore it wuz sun-up, an' crawled into the thicket, an' laid there all day, an' seen everything, an' when they give the word: 'For'erd march!' I edged clear up by the road, an' as they tromped up to the covered bridge over Injun Crick, I could most 'a' teched 'em. I watched the line till it wuz out o' sight—an' then I got up an' leant

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ag'in' the fence an' watched the dust till it wuz all gone—an' little boys acrost the road begun a-singin' out: 'We'll hang Milt Shanks on a sour apple tree.'

"My woman never said a word when I come home; it wuz like my ghost wuz there. Well, us 'Knights o' the Golden Circle' met—an' they wuz lots uv us; we sent help to the 'Johnnies,' an' pizened cattle, an' burnt the places o' women left alone. We plotted insurrection—an' I went to Richmon', Virginny, twict.

"Time went on an' Vicksburg come, an' one night a feller galloped out to Millville jist at dusk an' hitched to the ole sycamore by the milk-house. 'When'd you hyear frum Joe?' sez he.

"'Last week,' sez I.

"'How wuz he?' sez he, a-foolin' round, a-tightenin' up his girth.

"'All right,' sez I.

"'Joe's dead!' sez he.

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“My woman jist ketched her breath, tuk her Bible, shet her jaws, set by the winder an’ sed nuthin’; neighbors come but she didn’t notice ’em ’cept to say: ‘Take the little girl’—Madeline’s mother, you know—‘off to stay all night an’ leave me ’lone.’

“I kin see that woman yit a-lukin’ out over the clearin’ an’ beyant like—to’ard the South. After dark, I got up to go.

“‘Not to-night!’ sez she. ‘Don’t stay fer me—but as you prize yer soul’s salvation, the ghost o’ yer boy ’ll smite you—an’ you ain’t fit to die!’

“‘I got to!’ sez I. I leant over to tech her, but she drewed away, a-tremblin’ an’ a-sayin’: ‘Fer God’s sake, Milton Shanks, yer unclean!’

“That night we stole fifty horses; I wuz gone till after midnight, an’ when I come home I loked frum fur down

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the field an' the winder wuz a-shinin' but not frum the moon as much as the face that wuz in it, an' I shuk like the ager, an' the ole sycamore I'd passed a thousand times turned to things turrible 'fore my eyes. Fin'ly I went in, an' the woman kep' a-lukin' out, an' I sez sumpin', but she didn't make no stir, an' it wuz the strangest stillness I ever heerd. I started over to'ard her when a voice come out o' nothin' at all—an' it sez: 'Don't—she's mine!'

"It wuz so plain I called out, but they wuz no answer, an' I lit a bunch o' husks that wuz fer kindlin' an' I held them up. Her head wuz a-restin' like—back ag'in' the tidy—an' she loked glad—an' I crawled over on my knees. She'd gone to jine Joey.

"Then they wuz a whistle—an' three more—an' I went down whur fellers with masks wuz an' I tole 'em the road

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to take to kill the Guv'ner on his way to the speakin' next day.

“They fetched Joey home, an’ the two was buried same time—I went to the church a-wearin’ a ‘Copper Head’ badge on my coat; it wuz filed out uv a ole-fashioned cent. But instead o’ trouble they wuz all strange-like an’ kind ’cept when I went up to luk at Joey, a soldier feller led me off.

“‘I wuz with him when he fell,’ sez he. ‘Jist ’fore he died he gasped out: “God bless my mother an’ sister—but if you take me back, don’t let *him* see me—if he’d on’y a-fought on the other side—yes, I’d ’a’ bin proud if he’d ’a’ bin one uv ’em ’at shot me.”’

“‘How did he fall?’ sez I. The soldier feller straightened up proud-like, an’ sez he: ‘Major Joseph Shanks, my commander, sir, fell gran’—horse shot—leapt up like a tiger—hat a-wavin’

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on his sword—led the charge afoot—
planted the flag the ladies give—planted
it on the parapet with his own hand—
an' a whole squad shot him in his
tracks—but they wuz soldiers, sir—
they sez: “Come an' git him, boys”—
an' they tuk off their hats an' cheered
as we carried him down the field.
Grant seen it through his glass, an' sez
he: “He's a Colonel if he gits back!”

“I wanted to take that black box
with the flag on it—take it in my arms
an' run straight on ferever—an' a-goin'
out, I tried to edge round to luk jist
onct, but the soldier feller wuz a-watchin'
an' he stepped in a-sayin': ‘I'm sorry,
but a promise to a cum'erd that's dead
—that's diff'rent like.’

“A drink, please, Mad'lin.

“Have some, Hardy?”

The Colonel looked clear through
him without seeing and made no reply.

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He swallowed audibly, and slowly licked his lips.

“Now then—when that soldier feller said that, all the light an’ all the stars busted in my eyes—I fell down on the floor o’ the church, an’ then I had the fever an’ it hung on a long spell, an’ ’fore the Millville boys come back, I tuk my little girl an’ cleared out—an’ come hyere.”

Throughout the recital Colonel Hardy’s impatience had been manifest, but he had weighed humanity’s duty to a passing life, and then he was unwilling to add a straw to the burden of Madeline as she sat crushed by the story of treason. The room was closed; the air saturated with mullein; the Colonel had backed against the wall; he could stand no more.

“Wait a minute—hyear me through—you won’t be sorry, mebbe—I got to tell it in my own way.”

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The Colonel made a low bow to the Incomparable which she did not see. His hand was upon the latch.

“Then luk at this an’ you may find time to stay a spell,” cried Shanks, handing him a time-yellowed letter.

Hardy read, then backed against the door with arms outstretched, cast his cane upon the bed, and spoke in the lowest tone he was ever known to use:

“My God—who’s crazy—you or I!”

Philip drew the paper from his hand, then he and Madeline read it together:

EXECUTIVE MANSION,
WASHINGTON, *April 11th*, 1865.
MR. MILTON SHANKS,
Millville, ——

DEAR MILT: Lee’s surrender ends it all. I cannot think of you without a sense of guilt,—but it had to be.

I alone know what you did—and even more—what you endured. I can

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not reward you; man cannot reward anything worth while—there is only One who can.

I send you a flag handkerchief; it is not new but you will prize it the more for that.

I hope to shake your hand sometime.
Your friend,

A. LINCOLN.

Shanks alone was able to speak, and he was calm.

“Elephant”—he used the name with assurance—“do you recollect the time you druv me to the train in the March o’ ’61?”

“Very well; you went to look at cattle.”

“That’s what I tole you.” His eyes brightened. “I wuz called to Washin’ton by Lincoln, an’ at night, after the last feller left he tuk me up to the lib’ary an’ sez he: ‘It’s a-goin’ to take all kinds o’ men to save the Union.’

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Then he walked over to'erd a winder an' without turnin' round, sez he: 'Milt, how much do you love yer country?'

"'I cahilate I'd die fer it!' sez I.

"He shambled down in a cheer an' wrapped his legs round each other like a wild grape-vine, an' after a spell, sez he: 'Recollec' when you wuz a boy an' I helped yer father clear that eighty by the crick—well, one mornin' when it wuz cold an' blowin' snow—mud axle-deep—an' church four mile off—yer mother called yer little sister Frances, an' sez she: "It's Lent; it ain't 'nough to love the Lord; you'd ought to give up sumpin'."

"'Well, Frances lukt out at the team a-shiverin' an' sez she: "Guess I'll give up the church.'"

"At this, Lincoln got up an' stood a-flappin' the tails uv a long gown ag'in'

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the fire-place an' laughed an' laughed, then purty soon a cloud come over his face, an' he begun awful slow like:

“‘The South’s a-sayin’ she’ll git yer State an’ bust us in two. O’ course she can’t, but them woods o’ yourn is full o’ bad men, an’ they’ll git worse—Milt, it ain’t ’nough fer you to jist die—thousan’s o’ boys is a-cryin’ to do that—you must give up sumpin’ more’n life.’

“‘Try me,’ sez I.

“‘Lincoln run his hands through his hair an’ went on:

“‘It means to be odious in the eyes o’ men an’ women—it means to eat yer own heart, fer you can’t tell wife ner chile—you must play it out if it takes the hide—I want you to jine them cowardly devils—be the worst uv ’em—be their leader—I need you, Milt, yer country needs you.’

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“It hadn’t bin a minute since he wuz a-laughin’, but when he lifted his hands it seemed we wuz the on’y folks in the world, an’ yit he wouldn’t ’a’ woke a baby a-sleepin’ in that room.

“‘I’ll do it,’ sez I.

“Then he tuk a little flag out o’ his pocket an’ put it on the table, an’ sez he: ‘Come hyere, Milt, I’ll muster you into the service as my friend’—an’ he put my hand on that flag—whur the blue wuz—an’ all the stars—an’ then he put his hand on mine an’ said nuthin’.

“They wuz never a meetin’ o’ them devils I didn’t ’tend, an’ the times I went to Richmon’, Virginny—that wuz to talk ’bout openin’ the Union prisons—an’ I reported it all to Lincoln—at night.

“It wuz turrible when I couldn’t tell the boy when he marched off; an’ when

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that soldier feller wouldn't let me see his face, sez I to myself: 'They're all dead; I'll jist keep still—it's mine—all the hate an' all the cussin',' an' it got to be so when some feller 'ud stone a dog I'd be jealous o' that dog—an' I kep' a-thinkin' o' Joey at Vicksburg, an' I kep' a-dreamin' o' Joey at Vicksburg, till I come to think I'd tuk it all by myself.

"I'd 'a' kep' that vow an' held a tight lip an' let the lamp blow out, but when this hitch come in my side, I got to thinkin' o' Mad'line—how fine she wuz—an' what she'd be some day—a gran' singer—an' how folks down at Millville 'ud be a-claimin' uv her through her kin, an' sumpin' said sharp like: 'Mebbe some feller 'll up an' say: "Yep, she's got traitor blood"'—an' that—that wuz the on'y thing I couldn't stand!"

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The Incomparable sank upon her knees, her arms round his neck. In a little while she lifted her face: "And you—you are my grandfather!—I would rather be yours than have in my veins the blood of a hundred kings—and all of them Alfreds!"

Shanks smiled upon her for an instant. "Mad'line, fill my pipe.

"Now, I'll sign my name.

"On'y one thing more—Dan'l, keep that an' read it at my buryin'—that's the place—an' read it without no frills."

The Colonel was leaning forward like a great mastiff, with shaggy head upon his hands, folded above the cane. It seemed a long time he sat that way and a mist came from the war-clouds which had drifted out of the far sky of half a century.

"Milt," he said as best he could,

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“the soldiers were just common stuff—the wine of war is wild—it’s from a frozen grape; it sets men crazy and they want to die. I’ve seen boys that should have been upon their mothers’ knees pet a cannon like it was a baby, and when an arm was hanging mangled. I’ve seen them go up and shout into the ear of death: ‘Take me, damn you—if you can!’ That’s fine, but it isn’t the best that’s in folks. I’ve asked myself many times who did the most. I’ve had the skeletons all stand up—among them was the skeleton of a prisoner who had died day by day—toes fell off; reason ran away; no glory in it—nothing but oblivion. The other side said to him: ‘Come and be free!’ But he said back: ‘To hell with you and your flag!—I’ll starve; I’ll chatter first!’ I said to that skeleton: ‘You’re the best!’—but, Milt, I’ve

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been wrong—will you take the hand of a man who only fought?”

The larger placed his arm round the smaller in the chair, and there was no sound but the wind in the trees and the candle sputtering in the socket.

“Milt, damn it!—I beg a thousand pardons, Miss—haven’t you got some applejack, plain alcohol, or something?” The Colonel stretched and straightened till he seemed to touch the roof.

“No’p, Elephant; ain’t got no luxuries, ’less it’s mullen.”

“Can you spare a little?”

“Yep, I cahilate; there on the chimbley.”

The Colonel lighted a pipe as black as the pot hanging on the crane, and his face was glorious—it was the most gallant act of his life.

“Try it, Philip!” he exclaimed with

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enthusiasm. "There's nothing like it!"

He turned to the Incomparable, "I have been delighted to know of your success." Then he paused abruptly, and in confusion glanced toward Shanks, whose eye kindled as he spoke:

"Elephant, I've an idy—one 'at never come till now—you put the railroad through Happyville, didn't you—that wuz what fetched you hyere—an' you brung along that surveyin' feller, whose woman tuk little Mad off to ejicate?"

"What of it?" Hardy's smile broadened.

"You can't fool me—you done all this fer her yerself—but you done it under a 'sumed name!"

"Milt, the only thing I know is that—several hundred years ago, as it

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seems—there was a better boy than I who wanted to go to West Point, but he stood aside for me.”

Shanks waved his hand toward the picture of himself and the Incomparable. “Fetch it hyere, Dan’l—an’ git my spec’s, Mad’line—quick.”

He put them on, but only to remove them, saying: “They’s sumpin’ on ’em—I can’t see—I——”

His pipe fell to the floor and something like lightning shivered his body.

He smiled and spoke with difficulty: “Come nearer, Mad’line, my dear chile, I want to make a will—I’m rich, fer I’ve got you!—I’m the riches’ man in all the worl’—I give you to Dan’l—ferever!”

He gazed into the fire and its ashes came into his lips as he added: “No’p; I didn’t want to be hard on Grant—

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but Vicksburg had to fall—an' so I went myself.

“Up—up!” he whispered.

As they raised him, a tide flowed into the room—a grand, white tide from a far-off sea; his head lifted in majesty:

“Lincoln says: ‘Come, Milt; I’ll muster you into the service as my friend!’”

When they laid him down, his face was like sunlight upon the snow.

Hardy was the first to speak: “He ought to have a badge of some kind!”

“He has one,” calmly replied the Incomparable, turning to the Bible upon the clock shelf; “I’ve been saving it for him.”

She placed the little flag upon his breast and laid his hand where the blue was—and all the stars.

CHAPTER X

THEY were going back to Millville; the Incomparable had decided that the story must be read in the air which had borne evil report against him.

“Colonel, do people always look so small—afterward?” Philip asked that morning.

“No—not all—once in a while a gentleman dies—and his soul is so large that you miss it.”

They reached Millville in the evening, and little by little, fragments of village memory stirred from their long sleep. The usual crowd was assembled after dark when two strangers entered the blacksmith shop. The Colonel silently surveyed the scene—the

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cobwebbed windows, the cinder floor, gritting underfoot, the rafters hung with horseshoes, the tin-reflectored, smoky-chimneyed lamp against the wall; the creaking, whistling bellows, like the snout of some sea monster, breathing violet flames into the queer dusk about the forge; the gray-bearded, leather-aproned, sooty-wrinkled, open-shirted smith with pipe turned upside down.

“Howdy, gentlemen.” He watched the glowing wagon tire and listened as another of his years, perched high beneath the lamp, read the weekly paper.

Conversation ceased round the door; the idlers straggled in to whisper and watch the strangers; now the smith added a glance to the speculation and heaped more cinders upon the tire.

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“Better stand back a little!”

There is no discord in the anvil's scale; it is the only song that meteors leap from.

The work was done.

“What's the damage?” asked the farmer.

“Quarter.”

The smith stripped perspiration from his brow, dropped the coin into a bag and tied the strings, then wiped his hands upon the leather apron, filled his pipe, and gazed inquiringly.

“You play a good tune,” observed Hardy.

“I practise a heap, sir.”

The crowd smiled.

“But there's music in you.” The Colonel placed his finger upon the blacksmith's cheek. “That scar tells me you were once a bugler.”

The smith stepped back, squinted

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his eyes, then extended both his hands.

“I want to ask a favor,” said the Colonel; the two stepped to the door.

The church was crowded next day, but only a few had known our friend, and they were amazed that Colonel Hardy should have returned with the body of his foe.

A young minister prayed, read a chapter, and announced that services would be concluded in the yard.

There the soldiers had eaten their last dinner; in the doorway the battle-flag had been given; yonder was the covered bridge, warped, its floor sunken between the piers, half its siding gone; there was the roadside—the thicket through which he had crawled to watch

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the fading volunteers and then the dust.

Near the fence was a monument, small yet distinguishable from the rest—a broken column with soldier cap and sword, and the inscription:

Madeline Shanks—1825–1863.

Major Joseph Shanks—1845–1863.

Armies are inspired by gallant deaths
no less than victories.

Out of the sky, overcast with gray,
sifted the first light fall of snow.

“It’s the place, Dan’l; read it without no frills.”

It seemed to Philip as if the words came out of the trees.

As he turned the pages, old men with soldier buttons in their coats moved nervously nearer, leaning forward on their canes, and at the end a sigh like the penitence of pitiless

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Chance swept over the astonished villagers.

The Incomparable appeared to stand apart from all the others, and when at last she raised her eyes, it was with pride unutterable. She might have been the last of a Roman line, rather than the last of a simple woodsman's blood.

The young minister lifted his hands.

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me: ‘What are these which are arrayed in white robes and whence came they?’ And I said unto him: ‘Sir, thou knowest’; and he said unto me: ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’”

The blacksmith drew a battered bugle from his coat. For a little while the call of “Taps” lingered

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round, then it floated off down the valley—and Milton Shanks was mustered out as a soldier.

The Millville region was robed in snow. Windows of farm-houses were hung with evergreens, and lamp-lights fell pink upon the glistening earth. The sky was clear; the air was keen and strung with bells. Among the sleighs which flew along the pike with song and laughter, one was silent. It stopped before the village church.

Santa Claus had come to that church the night before and found it clad in boughs with candles in them, and children for miles around had shouted greetings.

The door now opened, and the twinkling candles in the boughs gave welcome.

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As they stood in the trembling light, she was like the calmness of evening, plumed with a golden cloud.

Long years before, in a cabin, a little girl who had come as a Christmas present, I sped a confidence to her grandfather—that she would be married this night.

The moon rolled out of a dappled cloud and it was bright as day. Two figures knelt by a mound in the church-yard. It was wrapped in a mantle of silver. Upon it a reverent hand now placed a wreath of holly.

A tall, straight man whose hair was white bowed to say: “I’d like to put a monument here—one that’s white—one that’s high.”

For a moment she lifted her eyes as one who heard but indistinctly.

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“Colonel, you are a dear old soul,
but only one monument will do—the
Glory of his Country.”



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